

MEDIA-USE PATTERNS, POLITICAL SOPHISTICATION,
AND
POLITICAL DISCONTENT

By

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This research addressed the question of whether significant and systematic relationships exist between the media mix people use for political information and resultant measurements of both their political sophistication and political discontent. The study design consisted of three media-use configurations: 1) heavy newspaper combined with lighter television use, 2) heavy television combined with lighter newspaper use, and 3) heavy use of both media. Each variable had two levels for race (black and white) and two levels of analyses (local and national). A quota sample assured relatively equal numbers of black (84) and whites (93). Statistical tests indicated a weak, inverse relationship between sophistication and discontent, but the results did not achieve statistical significance. At the local level, heavy television users proved as discontented as heavy newspaper users. Nationally, heavy users of newspapers were significantly more discontented than television

users. Heavy users of both media consistently emerged as the most politically trusting and efficacious at both levels of analysis, possibly due to a methodological artifact. Blacks were less discontented than whites at both levels of analysis, but only at the local level--where the outcome was attributed to community uniqueness--did those results achieve statistical significance. Some evidence points to an association of higher sophistication levels with newspaper use (in comparison to television), but the relationships were slight and not statistically significant.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Study's Importance

During the current century, scholarly interest in the relationship between mass media and politics dates at least to Lippmann (1922) who opined that democracy, as we know it in industrialized nations, cannot exist without mass media's important contributions to the democratic process. Beyond that recognition, however, debate over the media's salubrious, deleterious, or desultory role in the political process has waged between and among both academicians and practitioners of mass media and political science. For example, some have regarded the media (and especially television) as instruments for increasing levels of political sophistication among an otherwise politically uninformed and relatively disinterested electorate (Nie, Verba, & Petrocik, 1976). At the same time, others have argued that the media have trivialized politics (Marcuse, 1964), contributed to declining rates of voter turnout (McQuail, 1969), caused the reduced importance of political parties (Mendelsohn & Crespi, 1970), increased the power of the presidency relative to Congress (Kraus & Dennis, 1976), and adversely altered

the processes of party conventions, campaigning, and choosing candidates--especially in presidential elections (Asher, 1984). And at least one scholar (Neuman, 1986), in what he describes as a "paradox," maintains that "though the media are regarded as persuasive and powerful, few people are very interested in or well-informed about politics" (p. 133) and that "political news remains a small fraction of the overall information flow" (p. 136).

Of particular concern to the current study, some researchers (e.g., Robinson, 1976) also have suggested that television, in particular, largely was responsible for the steady increase in the electorate's political discontent with government after 1964. Such speculation has far-reaching implications for the political system in general because, as Craig (1979a) argued, "a political system cannot operate effectively in the absence of some minimal level of loyalty or allegiance on the part of its members" (p. 12). Additionally, Craig (1979a) suggested that "political discontent is a matter of some moral concern in a democratic culture..." (p. 4).

Conceptualizations

As the primary focus of interest here, the concept of political discontent represents both an intriguing and

an elusive phenomenon. From a purely practical point of view, political discontent seemingly can take on a wide range outcomes. For example, the concept could be applied to the apathetic voter who--after unsuccessfully confronting an entrenched, lethargic, and unresponsive governmental bureaucracy--opts to stay at home on election day out of sheer frustration with the system. At the same time, the concept also applies to another individual, who might have experienced an identical encounter and very similar feelings of frustration, but who might act very differently by trying to mobilize voters in an effort to "turn the rascals out." The concept applies to individuals who feel powerless or incompetent to exercise their civic rights and responsibilities within the political system as well as to those who have lost all confidence in their system and would seek to overthrow it. It is little wonder, then, that conceptual definitions of the political discontent construct have several facets.

The construct of political discontent, as conceptualized in the current study, follows the terminology advanced by Craig (1979a). Essentially, most scholars agree that the construct is composed of two broad sub-categories: political efficacy and political trust. Some scholars further sub-divide efficacy into both internal

and regime-based dimensions and trust into an incumbent-based and again a regime-based element. (Craig, Neimi, & Silver, 1990). The current study considers only regime-based efficacy and incumbent-based trust as the conceptual components of the construct of political discontent because, as discussed below, while significant declines in regime-based efficacy and incumbent-based trust have been recorded in the American electorate since the 1960s, there have been no changes of any consequence in the measurements of internal efficacy or regime-based trust.

As an additional distinction, the study looks at regime-based efficacy only from the perspective of "the ability of citizens in general to influence what the government does [and] the relative distribution of political power in this country" (Craig, Neimi, & Silver, 1990, p. 298) and not from the standpoint of "the effectiveness of the electoral process in particular" (Craig, Neimi, & Silver, 1990, p. 298). The main reason for these limiting conditions is that the specific aspects of regime-based efficacy taken into consideration here bear importantly on the study's theoretical comparisons of racial differences in political discontent. Along these lines, Abramson (1977) presented a meta-analysis of 39 studies comparing differences in political discontent between

blacks and whites. Explanations for such differences related to such factors as individuals' beliefs about their ability to influence what government does and to their perceptions of power distribution but not to their judgments about the overall effectiveness of the electoral process. As an aside, although most of studies cited by Abramson (1977) reported that blacks felt less trusting and efficacious than whites, Emig (1990) found the exact opposite effect which provided additional impetus for the current study.

Another reason why the study limits regime-based efficacy to this definition, and also does not consider internal efficacy, is because, as Craig, Neimi, and Silver (1990) found:

(1) [I]nternal efficacy is indeed separate from external efficacy and (2) external efficacy is separate from political trust, at least when the former is measured in terms of the fairness of political procedures and outcomes rather than in terms of elite responsiveness to popular demands. p. 306

From the current study's perspective, therefore, interest centers on the responsiveness of government to its citizenry, rather than on individual citizen's feelings of competence or on the overall fairness of the political process.

With regard to trust, the current study looks only at the incumbent-based dimension primarily because, as Craig, Neimi, and Silver (1990) also found:

[I]ncumbent-based trust can and should be kept distinct from regime-based trust (or diffuse support). An important, substantive aside follows, namely that the drop in levels of [incumbent-based trust] since the early 1960s does not yet appear to have eroded American's confidence in their form of government and constitutional order...[the latter of which represents regime-based trust]. p. 306-307

Given the nature of the contemporary American political culture, therefore, regime-based efficacy and incumbent-based trust should combine to form the conceptual definition of political discontent as employed in this study.

Finally, one question which seems to be in dire need of research attention is the extent to which political discontent might be associated with another construct under consideration here: political sophistication. In other words, is it possible for individuals who have little knowledge of--and even less concern about or interest and involvement in--political and governmental affairs to also harbor strong feelings of political discontent? Or, must one know at least something about these matters for such feelings to manifest themselves? For the purposes of this study, the researcher takes the latter position. Another question addresses the subject of from where does political discontent stem. For example, some scholars argue that lower levels of political sophistication are associated with higher levels of political discontent (Robinson, 1976). The current study

takes the opposite view and, in fact, proposes that the more individuals know about politics and government, the more apt they are to register higher levels of political discontent. Later chapters explore that latter premise in more depth, but for now our attention remains more riveted to the notion that cognitions must precede affective orientations.

The position that knowledge and awareness of--or experience with--an object must precede the formation of attitudes toward that object might be seen in light of an example from relatively recent history. For instance, the Watergate break-in occurred in June 1972. General knowledge about the incident--an all of its ensuing ramifications--apparently was not very wide spread in the electorate at the time, however, because it did not keep American voters in the November election from returning Richard Nixon to a second term with such an overwhelming majority that the re-elected president termed the result "a mandate." Then, less than two years later, the diffusion of information about Watergate among the citizenry, along with a sharp increase in political discontent, resulted in Nixon's resignation in disgrace. Political scientists have debated about the levels of political sophistication in America (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960), whether sophistication has increased among

the electorate (Nie, Verba, & Petrocik, 1976), or whether sophistication has remained relatively unchanged (Abramson, 1983). Another perspective might be that sophistication changes with events, knowledge, interest, and information. The example of the Watergate incident tends to support that position in that voters who went to the polls in November 1972 were much less sophisticated about Watergate than was the American public in 1974. Accordingly, therefore, the discussion now turns to a brief conceptual consideration of political sophistication.

As explored in greater detail in Chapter 3, the construct of political sophistication is not defined or conceptualized among either political science or mass communication scholars with any unanimity. In fact, one finds conceptualizations of the construct ranging from single-dimension definitions such as simple factual knowledge (Bryce, 1904) or ideology (Converse, 1964) to multifaceted concepts which add the components of interest, concern, and involvement or participation to the calculus (Lau & Erber, 1985; Lusk & Judd, 1988; Luskin, 1987). The current study adopts the more recent conceptualizations by regarding political sophistication as inclusive of the more extensive dimensions. The previous discussion regarding political discontent concluded with a

brief summary of the Watergate scandal, suggesting that the American public did not react to the issue until after they had been made acutely aware of its existence. For example, in 1972, 53% of Americans polled expressed trust in their government to do what is right, and by 1976 that figure had plunged to 33% (Erber & Lau, 1990). In other words, in 1972 the American public presumably was not very enlightened about Watergate; by 1976 all of that had changed. And, it seems, the more people learned the more politically discontented they became. Learning apparently was the key here, and the primary vehicle for that learning appeared to be the media, including especially the work of Washington Post investigative reporters and the televised Watergate hearings. As explained more fully in later chapters, political discontent in America increased sharply during the Watergate period and continued to do so even after the Nixon resignation. A key question, then, asks whether the media--in their reporting of political and governmental actors and activities--might augment levels of political discontent to a greater degree than would otherwise be true if such people and events received less media attention. The extent to which media might play a contributing role in increasing levels of political discontent among the electorate, then, looms as a critically important field for

empirical investigation, and the current study acquires its thematic inspiration from that possibility.

First, the author takes the position that relatively few people in the American electorate rely on, use, depend on, or attend to one and only one medium of communication in order to obtain information about politics, government, or public affairs. At the same time, it also is acknowledged that many (if not most) people in this country might regard one medium as more important to them than others in their usual pursuit of such information (Chaffee, 1975). In exploring these possibilities, the current study limits its perspective to what many other studies have shown to be the two most important media for political, governmental, or public affairs information: newspapers and television (Robinson & Levy, 1986; Edelstein, 1974; Graber, 1988). This is not to say that other media channels are unimportant. Certainly there are those individuals for whom radio, news magazines, or interpersonal communication might be more important than either newspapers or television. The current study simply focuses on the two media that have been shown to be the most important for most people. More specifically, this study examines and compares three media use groups: 1) people who use both media but regard newspapers as more important to them than television (the

News/TV group), 2) people who use both media but regard television as more important to them than newspapers (the TV/News group), and 3) people who regard both media as equally important to them (the High Both group).¹

The next chapter reviews some relevant theoretical perspectives in an effort to establish the broader theoretical framework for the current study. Chapter 3 reviews the conceptual definitions of the constructs employed in the current research (i.e., political discontent, political sophistication, and media-use patterns) in greater detail. Chapter 4 contains the current study's theoretical assumptions and hypotheses. The study's methodology comprises Chapter 5, while Chapter 6 presents the results of the current research. The final chapter offers the current study's conclusions.

Notes

1. Gaziano (1990) reports results based on these same categories, although she includes two additional cells: 1) those low in dependence on both media and 2) those high in dependence on both. Also, Wagner (1983) reported results using a similar media-use configuration.

CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The research question for this study asks: Do media-use patterns, particularly the primary use of newspapers (as opposed to television) for political information, contribute to higher levels of political sophistication, which, in turn, lead to higher levels of political discontent? Chapter 3 explores the operational definitions of--and the research findings related to--each of the study's principal constructs (i.e., patterns of media use, political sophistication, and political discontent), including an exploration of the empirical inter-relationships among these three variables. The current chapter focuses on the broader theoretical concepts underlying the constructs, and it does so from the perspective and within the context of several mass communication paradigms. The discussion here considers each paradigm in terms of its relevance to the current study and also looks at several relevant focused theories.

A most important scholarly contribution to communication science theory emanates from Lowery and DeFleur (1988), who reviewed the evolution of three major theoretical paradigms for the study of mass com-

munication. According to these authors, the three theoretical perspectives include the mass society paradigm, the cognitive paradigm, and the meaning paradigm. The first of these, the mass society paradigm, relates only indirectly to the current study and, therefore, receives very limited attention here. Although Plato originally conceived of "the analogy between society and an organism, a system of related parts in dynamic equilibrium" (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p. 31), the philosophical conception of a mass society did not emerge until the 19th century with the work of Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Ferdinand Tonnies, and Emile Durkheim. All of these writers concentrated on the results of an industrialized society, including specialization, division of labor, and social differentiation. In addition, Tonnies speculated that such differentiation could lead to psychopathological breakdowns in vital communication links within society, and Durkheim later advocated that these communication breakdowns could result in "anomie" or social discontent (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989). Finally, in this century, Harold Lasswell pulled together the concepts of isolated individuals living within a differentiated society and the psychopathological aspects of such a society into a mass communication perspective (Chaffee & Hochheimer, 1985).

As stated, the mass society paradigm bears only indirect relevance to the current study. Specifically, the paradigm basically attempts to describe (rather than explain or predict) the social environment of contemporary American society. The extent to which social discontent (or anomie) might exist in America today or to which--if it does exist--it might contribute to (or at least provide a breeding ground for) political discontent remains speculative and also goes beyond the scope and interest of the present study. Two aspects of the paradigm do fall within the purview of the current effort, however. First, the paradigm makes it clear that any research into either social or political discontent must take into account the importance of mass communication's role in those processes. And finally, that aspect of the mass society paradigm that deals specifically with social conflict has special implications for mass media and politics in that "the press and government have a long history as adversaries" (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p. 36).

The Major Paradigms

The Cognitive Paradigm

The second major paradigm for studying mass media offered by Lowery and DeFleur (1988) is the psychological (cognitive) paradigm. According to the authors, this

paradigm "stresses how sensory input shapes perception, belief, attitudes, values, remembering, thinking, and, ultimately, action" (p. 453). DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989) have elaborated on this approach stating that it "openly gives a central place to the mental activities of normal human beings in shaping their conduct" (p. 40). They also set forth some basic assumptions subsumed by the paradigm as:

1. Individual members of a society can best be thought of as active receivers of sensory input, whose behavioral responses to such stimuli are shaped by inner mental (cognitive) processes.
2. Cognitive processes enable individuals to transform sensory input in various ways: code it, store it, interpret it selectively, distort it, and retrieve it for later use in decisions about behavior.
3. The cognitive processes that play key parts in shaping an individual's behavior include perception, imagery, belief systems, attitudes, values, tendencies toward balance in such factors, plus remembering, thinking, and numerous other mental activities.
4. The cognitive components of a given individual's mental organization are products of his or her prior learning experiences, which may have been either deliberate, accidental, social, or solitary. (p. 40)

The cognitive paradigm bears directly on all three of the current study's major constructs. For example, although political scientists may have differed on what specific elements ought to comprise the construct of political sophistication (their views ranging from political knowledge or conceptualization alone to knowl-

edge plus several other factors including behavior), most of these scholars agree that sophistication primarily represents a cognitive phenomenon.¹ The paradigm's assumptions also relate strongly to political discontent in that behavioral responses to cognitive processes can include attitudes and belief systems about and toward governmental performance. Finally, the first assumption of the paradigm relates to the receiving of sensory input (which can include stimuli in the form of media messages), and the last assumption dealing with prior learning experiences certainly encompasses experiences with the media that could have been "deliberate, accidental, social, or solitary." In other words, the proposition here states that 1) people "actively" receive messages from the media about political events, actors, and so forth, 2) such media messages can reflect positive, negative, or neutral reports, 3) the kinds of impressions people form depend to a large extent on how they perceive (i.e., cognitively process) such messages, 4) people's cognitive representations shape behavioral (including evaluative) responses, and 5) the media function as socialization agents in this process. Further, the current study takes the position that the cognitive paradigm, alone, offers only a partial theoretical framework for the study of mass communication, especially in

relation to politics. In that regard, the author agrees with Lowery and DeFleur (1988) that, "in the long run, an adequate theory of the role of the mass media in the processes of socialization in society must include both the cognitive and meaning paradigms" (p. 457).² This holds true, the author maintains, because the process operates within the context of--and depends upon--schemata formation. Schema theory, therefore, provides a conceptual link between the two larger paradigms, as discussed in the following section.

Schema theory

The psychological cognitive paradigm provides the rubric for a number of theories, including those of persuasion, attitude and attitude change, information processing, and schema theory, to mention just a few. For the purposes of this study, the latter represents the most inclusive theoretical perspective because "schema theory does not constitute a sharp break with other theories that deal with cognitive functions. Rather, it builds on them" (Graber, 1988, p. 28). In fact, schema theory relates closely to both information processing and social learning theories. Although the current study does not represent a schema investigation per se, the work here reflects the flavor of that approach. That schema theory forges a conceptual link between the cogni-

tive and meaning paradigms also should become evident as the discussion unfolds.

Essentially, schema (schemata in the plural) "is a cognitive structure consisting of organized knowledge about situations and individuals that has been abstracted from prior experiences" (Graber, 1988, p. 28).³ Concepts underlying schema theory have endured for centuries. As some have observed, "if he could have penetrated the psychological jargon, Plato would have understood the idea of schemata very well [in that schemata] bear many similarities to Plato's idea of forms" (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p. 256-257).⁴ In the current century, one also finds strong similarities between Lippmann's (1922) notion of stereotypes and schemata. In fact, although he did not couch it in theoretical terms, Lippmann became the first scholar to link the idea with mass communication.

Among contemporary social scientists "there is considerable disagreement about the precise definition of schema theory" (Graber, 1988, p. 27).⁵ Others have observed that "the term has dozens of definitions today, but it generally refers to the way in which human memory is psychologically structured and how this structure makes possible perception, communication, and social behavior" (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p. 256).

Of particular relevance to the current study is Graber's (1988) concept that people generally use their schemata to create mental scenarios of events based on past experience. Specifically, "they also may have ready-made evaluations and feelings about all aspects of these scenarios, and they may make inferences based on the scenarios" (p. 28). Moreover, for the average American, schemata appear to reflect rather simplified knowledge structures. Of even greater relevance to the current study, Graber (1988) states:

Simplified representation seems particularly important for a sphere of knowledge, such as politics, that presents flood tides of information through the mass media yet is far removed from the personal experiences and interests of average citizens. (p. 29)

That people use schemata as a relatively inexpensive⁶ means of assimilating information appears consistent with other theories in the persuasion literature, especially Chaiken's (1980) heuristic (versus systematic) model of information processing and Petty and Cacioppo's (1984) concept of peripheral (versus central) routes to persuasion. In addition, a number of political scientists also have employed schema theory in their research.⁷

Schemata related to media use and politics

Although Chapter 3 (Literature Review of the Constructs) deals with the practical aspects of schemata in

relation to media use and political constructs, the present section addresses a few theoretical assumptions about these relationships. First, schemata may develop "independently from personal experiences, vicarious experiences, or reasoning processes" (Bennett, 1981, p. 101), and "vicarious experiences that may lead to schema creation or modification include mass media stories" (Graber, 1988, p. 184). Second, the assumptions that "schema acquisition bears the imprint of the particular culture in which learning takes place" (Bennett, 1981, p. 87) and that "information sources reflect general cultural or subcultural values" (Graber, 1988, p. 185) also bear importance and relevance to the current study. ("Information sources" obviously include the mass media.) Graber (1988) narrows this thinking to the political arena by stating that "in the realm of politics, most people rely primarily on culturally provided explanations, largely supplied by the media" (p. 187). Graber (1988) adds:

The average person lacks direct experience with the complexities of politics. The information from which schemata are largely built is indirect, coming primarily from the mass media. (p. 189)

The Meaning Paradigm

As previously mentioned, one facet of schema theory includes its role as a conceptual link between the cognitive and meaning paradigms. When one considers that, in simplest terms, the meaning paradigm focuses on mass

media's role in the social construction of reality, the connection becomes quite clear. As more formally defined, the meaning paradigm "notes that our conceptions of norms, interpretations, and action requirements are meanings derived from participation in various kinds of communication processes" (Lowery & DeFleur, 1988, p. 456). The clarity of the schema theory linkage sharpens with the recall of Walter Lippmann's (1922) notion of "the world outside" and "the pictures in our heads." Describing how the use of propaganda during World War I caused people to act in ways that had no relationship to reality, Lippmann became the first mass communication scholar to focus attention on the phenomenon of how people construct meanings (in contemporary terms, how they create schemata) about actors and events based on press reports. The role of mass media in the process represented the only novelty in Lippmann's thesis, however. The notion of mediated reality dates back to Plato's Allegory of the Cave⁸ where the chained prisoners' conceptions of reality (i.e., their schemata for things) emanated from shadows cast on a wall. The fact that Plato's prisoners "shared" (i.e., they agreed upon) common meanings for their individually created cognitions again illustrates the connection between schema theory and the two major paradigms discussed here.

In the current century, writers who advanced and refined the basic tenets of these concepts included John Dewey, William James, Charles Pierce, Charles Horton Cooley, and George Herbert Mead (Manis & Meltzer, 1978). More recently, in their treatise on the sociology of knowledge, Berger and Luckmann (1966) postulated that "the sociology of knowledge understands human reality as socially constructed reality" (p. 172). These authors recognized the essential role of language and communication in the process of the social construction of reality when they stated that "the sociology of knowledge presupposes a sociology of language" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 169). They went on to add:

Language originates in and has its primary reference to everyday life; it refers above all to the reality [we] experience in wide-awake consciousness, which is dominated by the pragmatic motive (that is, the cluster of meanings directly pertaining to present or future actions) and which [we] share with others in a taken-for-granted manner. (p. 36)

The pragmatic motive represents a highly relevant concept to the current study, given Graber's (1988) observation that most people pragmatically become "cognitive misers" when it comes to processing complex political information. Elaborating on this aspect of their thesis, Berger and Luckmann (1966) state:

Since everyday life is dominated by the pragmatic motive, recipe knowledge, that is, knowledge limited to pragmatic competence in routine performances, oc-

cupies a prominent place in the social stock of knowledge. (p. 40)

The emergence of the meaning paradigm for the study of mass communication began as dissatisfaction with the cognitive paradigm grew during the early 1970s because the latter had not produced anything more than the "minimal effects view of the media" (Lowery & DeFleur, 1988, p. 455). These authors go on to explain:

Communication researchers began to look less for short-term and immediate changes in people based on opinion and attitude manipulation and more for subtle, but nevertheless significant, influences brought about by long-term exposure to media content. (p. 456)

DeFleur (1970) reflected the early shift in the thinking of mass communication scholars toward the meaning paradigm when he wrote:

[T]he mass media, through selective presentations and emphasis of certain themes, create impressions among their audiences that common cultural norms concerning the emphasized topics are structured or defined in some specific way. Since individual behavior is usually guided by cultural norms (or the actor's impressions of what the norms are) with respect to a given topic or consideration, the media would then serve indirectly to influence conduct. (p. 129)

DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989) offer the following assumptions as concepts upon which the meaning paradigm rests:

1. Human memory makes possible the development of knowledge.
2. Knowledge exists in the form of concepts, which are named or labeled structures of meaning remembered by individuals.

3. Meanings for concepts can be developed by a person either by direct sensory contact with various aspects of reality, or through symbolic interaction in a language community.

4. Language is essentially a set of symbols (verbal or nonverbal) that label agreed-upon meanings.

5. Conventions standardize the links between symbol and meaning, making communication possible among those who adhere to the rules.

6. The language symbols and conventions agreed upon and used by a particular people shape their perception of, interpretation of, and conduct toward their physical and social world. (p. 259)

Basically, the relevance of these assumptions for the current study include that 1) people use their cognitive processes to develop political knowledge, 2) political knowledge exists within a range of highly to minimally developed political schemata, 3) the mass media play a key role in communicating both raw data in the form of mediated political information and interpretation in terms of what that information means, 4) ergo, mass media influence the development of individual political schemata, and 5) people make political judgments (e.g., evaluations of political actors, events, institutions, and so forth) on the basis of whether their political schemata represent positive, negative, or neutral dispositions. The remaining task, therefore, emerges as a need to link the positivity or negativity of media messages with audience beliefs and behaviors and that task

presents itself as the primary purpose and objective of the current study. From a theoretical standpoint, one focused theory under the meaning paradigm (cultivation analysis theory), along with two related theoretical perspectives, provide some insight.

Cultivation analysis theory

Cultivation analysis theory and research evolved from a focus on televised violence and "the national concern with the effects of violence that characterized the 1960s and 1970s" (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p. 262). Two major federal studies gave the initial impetus to the growth and development of this investigative field. The first federal thrust was President Lyndon Johnson's appointment of the Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, and the second was the Surgeon General's report on the impact of televised violence in 1971. Among mass communication scholars attracted to the study of televised violence and its effects, George Gerbner and his associates became the most prominent.⁹ According to DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989),

[Initially,] the content analyses, conducted by George Gerbner, were not intended to be theoretical; they were numerical accountings of how much of several kinds of violence were being shown on the television screen. (p. 262)

During the 1970s, the Gerbner team published a yearly Violence Profile.¹⁰ "In recent years Gerbner and others have developed both a theoretical framework and an

empirical strategy" (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p. 262) for studying the phenomenon of televised violence from which the theory underlying cultivation analysis emerged. Essentially,

cultivation analysis is the third component of a research paradigm called Cultural Indicators that investigates (1) the institutional processes underlying the production of media content, (2) images in media content, and (3) relationships between exposure to television's messages and audience beliefs and behaviors (Morgan & Signorielli, 1990, p. 15).

Although most research in this field has concentrated on the medium of television, an important consideration for the current study calls attention to the fact that:

cultivation analysis is concerned with the more general and pervasive consequences of cumulative exposure to cultural media. Its underlying theoretical framework could be applied to any dominant form of communication (Morgan & Signorielli, 1990, p. 16).

In other words, according to these authors, cultivation analysis theory applies to print as well as electronic media, which presents an important qualification inasmuch as the current study proposes cultivation effects for both types of media.

Value-frames

Another concept, that of value-frames, also has relevance for the current study, and it fits neatly under the cultivation analysis rubric. "A value-frame is defined as the criterion by which people, events, and issues are evaluated" (Ball-Rokeach, Power, Guthrie, &

Waring, 1990, p. 255).¹¹ Furthermore, "the value-frame concept highlights the central evaluative function of values in peoples' and societies' belief systems" (Ball-Rokeach et al., 1990, p. 255). More specifically, media also have value-frames. As some scholars have observed, "The media are not passive agents in the struggle to control public discourse" (Ball-Rokeach et al., 1990). In particular, these authors state:

Value-frames appear in media coverage of issues because they are powerful and efficient tools for the organization and symbolic construction of the meaning of issues and events (stories). (p. 256)

Socially constructed reality revisited

Drawing on Berger and Luckmann's (1966) work, Tuchman (1978) applied the social construction of reality concept (discussed previously) to mass media in order to arrive at the same theoretical position as the cultivation analysts. According to Tuchman (1978),

News does not mirror society. It helps to constitute it as a shared social phenomenon, for in the process of describing an event, news defines and shapes that event, much as news stories construed and constructed the early period of the modern women's movement as the activities of ridiculous bra burners. (p. 184)

Elaborating on this notion, Tuchman (1978) continues:

News simultaneously records and is a product of social reality, because it provides news consumers with a selective abstraction designed to be coherent despite its neglect of some details. (p. 189-190)

The same author adds:

News stories not only lend occurrences their existence as public events, but also impart character to

them, for news reports help to shape the public definition of happenings by selectively attributing to them specific details or "particulars". (p. 190)

From the news consumer's perspective, Tuchman (1978) also states:

When news consumers read or view news, they add details--but not necessarily those deleted in the processing of the story. Selective abstraction and representation of information and the reflexive attribution of meaning to events-as-news are natural features of everyday life. (p. 190)

Additionally, Tuchman (1978) maintains:

News readers also work to find meaning in the inked squiggles on the page. They perceive words and sentences, facts and interpretations. They actively apprehend and attribute meaning to those squiggles much as they actively apprehend articulated noises as utterances and language. (p. 187)

The next chapter, in part, reviews research findings and empirical evidence supporting cultivation analysis theory, especially from the perspective of impression formation literature.

Racial Differences: Theoretical Explanations

In his meta-analytic review of 39 studies dealing with differences between blacks and whites on the constructs of political efficacy and trust, Abramson (1977) reported that four of six studies carried out prior to 1967 showed blacks as more trusting than whites. In the majority of studies (24 of 33) conducted during and after the summer of 1967, however, blacks emerged as less trusting than whites.

Abramson (1977) considers four possible theoretical explanations for black-white differences in political discontent. Abramson (1977, 1983) labeled the four explanations 1) intelligence, 2) political-education, 3) social-deprivation, and 4) political-reality. The first he dismissed summarily on the basis of conflicting empirical evidence and because he "found little theoretical reason that intelligence should contribute to feelings of political trust" (Abramson, 1977, p. 108). The second explanation relates to differences in formal education between schools that consist of primarily black or primarily white students. This explanation Abramson also discounts because "it rests on the questionable assumption that schools are effective agents of political socialization" (1977, p. 108) and because, while it might help account for weak feelings of political effectiveness among black schoolchildren, "it cannot account for the low political trust" (1977, p. 108) among them.

Although the social-deprivation explanation has broader scope (and applies at different levels of analysis such as with adults), Abramson maintains that "it seems highly unlikely that the social-deprivation explanation by itself accounts for all the racial variation in feelings of political efficacy and trust" (1977, p. 109). On the other hand, Abramson (1983) states that "the

political-reality explanation seems to have considerable potential for explaining [racial] differences in political trust" (p. 223). Finally, Abramson (1977) suggests that "we might be able to develop a higher level explanation that incorporates both the social-deprivation and the political-reality explanations" (p. 111).

Of the four theoretical explanations considered by Abramson (1977, 1983) to explain racial differences in feelings of political effectiveness and trust, only the political-reality explanation has relevance and salience for the current study. Essentially, the explanation focuses on the ways in which "attitudes might be affected by actual political power arrangements" (1983, p. 160). One of Abramson's (1983) observations in connection with the political-reality explanation has significant importance for both the current study. Although Abramson (1977, 1983) uses the political-reality explanation primarily to account for lower levels of political trust and feelings of effectiveness among blacks (as opposed to whites), he also suggests:

Racial (and other subcultural) differences in feelings of political effectiveness should be reduced or reversed in settings where blacks (or other disadvantaged subcultural groups) have political power (1983, p. 163).

Chapter 3 will review some empirical evidence in support of this position.

Notes

1. For a more complete discussion of political sophistication, see Chapter 3.
2. Italics in the original.
3. In developing her definition, Graber cites the work of Conover and Feldman (1984), as well as that of Fiske and Linville (1980).
4. Italics in the original.
5. Italics in the original.
6. The term "inexpensive" is used here in the Downsian sense; see Downs (1957).
7. For example, see Miller, Wattenberg, and Malanchuk (1986) as well as Lau and Sears (1986).
8. The republic of Plato. (1958). (F. M. Cornfield, Trans.).
9. For example, see Gerbner (1971).
10. For example, see Gerbner & Gross (1976).
11. Italics in the original.

CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE CONSTRUCTS

The classical phrase expressing the basic tenet in the philosophy of Paul Descartes, "cogito, ergo sum" (I think, therefore I exist), directs the organizational scheme of this chapter. In other words, and within the context of the cognitive paradigm, this chapter--and the overall study--presumes an a priori cognitive condition which, in terms specific to the investigation here, states that people must know (through experience or other prior learning) about their government before they can make judgments about it. In taking this stand, the author concurs with the Lazarus (1982) position that "cognitive appraisal (of meaning or significance) underlies and is an integral feature of all emotional states" (p. 1021). Accordingly, therefore, the discussion first focuses on the evolution of scholarly opinion regarding definitions, components, and operationalization methods with respect to one of the study's two major political constructs: political sophistication. After that, the attention turns to a similar consideration of these same factors in relation to the second major construct of political discontent

with added emphases on trends in American political discontent, a consideration of the consequences and implications of those trends, and, finally, an exploration of some empirical findings regarding racial differences in discontent. How people acquire knowledge about their government becomes the next topic, and, within the context of schema theory and the meaning paradigm, the author concurs with the Graber (1988) contention the "in the realm of politics, most people rely primarily on culturally provided explanations, largely supplied by the media" (p. 187). Accordingly, therefore, the focus then shifts to an examination of mass media research in terms of effects (with special emphasis on the relationship between media and political knowledge), media content and context (highlighting differences between newspapers and television), and media use.

Political Sophistication Perspectives

Definition and Components

This section traces changes in how researchers have conceptualized the construct of sophistication beginning with the very limited perspective of "knowledge" as the sole component, moving to "levels of conceptualization" (the ideologue or "extremist" model), and eventually coming to the view that the construct actually consists of several components including a behavioral one.

Although "modern" scholarly interest in the subject of political knowledge dates back at least to Bryce (1904) and Lippmann (1922), "most sophistication research skips rapidly past definition" (Luskin, 1987, p. 857). Some earlier attempts at defining the construct included Downs (1957), who posited that principles of economics should dictate that most people rarely would voluntarily pay the real and opportunity costs of acquiring political information. Later, Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960) and Converse (1964) defined political sophistication in terms of "cognitive complexity" and "levels of conceptualization." Some scholars have observed that "it is difficult to exaggerate the importance of the levels of conceptualization and the subsequent research it inspired for understanding political ideology" (Lau & Erber, 1985). Luskin (1987) explains that levels of conceptualization involved:

Open-ended questions asking what respondents liked and disliked about each of the major parties and presidential candidates. The first and highest category ("Level A" or "ideology") housed responses that referred, at least implicitly, to some highly abstract concept(s), such as but not restricted to liberalism or conservatism; the second ("Level B" or "Group Benefits") responses that fell perceptibly short of this synoptic standard but alluded to the interests of political or politically relevant groups; the third ("Level C" or "The Nature of the Times") references to isolated issues, including, in the vaguest instances, the overall goodness or badness of ill-defined "conditions" or "things" in general; and the fourth and lowest ("Level D" or "No Is-

sue Content") the remaining, issueless, often contentless responses. (p. 877-878)

Luskin (1987) then elaborates on what he calls the "Campbellian/Conversionian variable" at some length but begins by stating that "sophistication in this sense is a matter of cognition" (p. 857). Explaining that Converse's notion of a constraint "is simply an association--a belief or attitude" (p. 858), Luskin (1987) also states that "a person's political cognitions, together with those with which they are constrained, are what is commonly known as his or her political belief system" (p. 858), and that political belief systems vary along three dimensions that "define political sophistication" (p. 859). Accordingly, those dimensions include size (how many cognitions a belief system contains), range (how large is the individual's political universe), and constraint (Luskin, 1987). Using Luskin's (1987) words, "sophistication is the conjunction of these dimensions. A person is politically sophisticated to the extent to which his or her [political belief system] is large, wide-ranging, and highly constrained" (p. 860).

Yet, the Campbellian/Conversionian approach to defining political sophistication has not escaped some criticism. As some authors have observed:

There is, however, one serious drawback to accepting the levels of conceptualization as a measure of political sophistication: Those levels are ordered

in terms of the ability to think about policy issues. This may well be the best way to think about political ideology, which was the intent of the levels of conceptualization. But it is a very limited way to think about political sophistication.¹ (Lau & Erber, 1985, p. 43)

According to Lau and Erber (1985), the construct of sophistication (which they use interchangeably with "expertise") "has more generally been defined in terms of knowledge and experience in a certain domain" (p. 43). Although the construct would include knowledge about political issues, "it also would include knowledge about other aspects of the political world, such as candidates, leaders and governments of foreign countries, past experience participating in politics, and paying attention to politics more generally" (Lau & Erber, 1985, pp. 43-44). Somewhat earlier in 1983, Lau, Coulam, and Sears had defined "political sophistication in terms of political knowledge and involvement" (Lau & Erber, 1985, p. 44).

Lusk and Judd (1988), who also see sophistication as synonymous with expertise, have observed that researchers have used "a variety of different definitions of expertise, including political knowledge, political involvement and interest, political behavior, and general education measures" (p. 106). These authors then present what they refer to as:

A very simple feature-based representational model, in which political objects (e.g., political candidates) are represented in memory along with their as-

sociated features. Thus, for instance, the candidate George Bush might be represented in memory along with information describing judgments of his personality, his stances on issues, and other characteristics deemed relevant to political evaluation by the individual. (Lusk & Judd, 1988, p. 107)

Furnham and Gunter (1983) cited a 1977 study by Stradling where the latter distinguished between propositional or factual knowledge and procedural or know how knowledge of politics, but they do not offer a theoretical definition of knowledge or sophistication of their own. Gaziano (1984) defined knowledge as "information, awareness, or understanding gained through experience or study" (p. 560) and conceptualized the construct both as awareness of an issue and as in-depth information. Petty (1988) looked at political knowledge holding in relation to an interaction of an individual's social environment, their attention to and interest in politics, and their public affairs media use, uncommonly treating information as the dependent variable. Finally, Sidanius and Lau (1989) criticized the ideologue (which they term "extremism") model because, they maintain, that perspective treats "various forms of political ideology...as if they were polar ends of the same unidimensional construct [and because] the extremism school also tends to assume that a given set of social and political beliefs implies a given set of personality and cognitive characteristics regardless of social/political context" (p. 86). The au-

thors then offer their context hypothesis which they characterize as:

The implications that a given set of sociopolitical beliefs/attitudes have for an individual's personality and cognitive style will be dependent upon the context within which the beliefs/attitudes are held rather than on the specific contents of the beliefs themselves. Therefore, one fundamental question to ask is not "what beliefs does a person have?" but rather "how much do a person's beliefs deviate from accepted norms within his or her particular context. (p. 87)

Measuring Political Sophistication

Given the plethora of conceptual definitions of political sophistication, it comes as no surprise that just as many operational definitions abound. When a scientific community cannot reach consensus on the definitional attributes of a construct, that frequently results in lack of agreement on how to measure the phenomenon. At the same time, it should be noted that one common thread does seem to run through the literature which links various perspectives together. Whatever else political sophistication may consist of, more-or-less general agreement suggests that it involves a cognitive element. As Graber (1988) reported from her year-long panel study:

Since schemata involve the organizing of cognitions...it stands to reason that mental acuity and practice in the use of mental maneuvers, as well as familiarity with a subject, would have an impact on the sophistication of schematic thinking. (p. 224)

What cognitions to tap and how to tap them appropriately remain problematic, however. The root of this problem may lie in Luskin's (1987) observation that "political cognitions, alas, are not directly apprehensible. We cannot actually count them.... We can only infer them, and their properties, from what a person says or does" (p. 864).

A number of scholars advocate composite measurements of sophistication. For example, Lau and Erber (1985) state:

Our measure of political sophistication then, is a summary index composed of the following components: familiarity with issues and candidates, knowledge of the polls, campaign-related behavior supporting a candidate, exposure to campaign news in the media, general interest in politics, and caring about the outcome of the election. (p. 48)

Similarly to Lau and Erber (1985), but more global and less campaign-oriented, Lusk and Judd (1988) used a questionnaire to assess respondents'

degree of political expertise and knowledge about politicians. Subjects were asked how likely they were to read newspaper articles about politicians, how involved they were in politics, and the extent to which the subject of politicians was an important one to them personally. Behavioral experience in the domain was assessed by asking subjects to circle any of five behaviors they had done in the past year: listened to a presidential news conference, read an article regarding a politician, campaigned for a political candidate, discussed politics with a friend, and voted in an election. Knowledge of politicians was assessed both by subjective and objective measures. The subjective measure asked subjects how knowledgeable about politicians they considered themselves to be. The objective measure con-

sisted of a series of multiple choice questions about politicians. (p. 111)

Berkowitz and Pritchard (1989) measured political knowledge in terms of 1) how many congressional candidates respondents could name, 2) the naming of election issues, and 3) whether respondents could discriminate between the two major party candidates' positions on three campaign issues. Furnham and Gunter (1983) tested adolescents' political knowledge by asking questions about different political party policies, names of prominent political leaders, names of local political leaders, parliamentary and local political issues, and which levels of government provided specific public services.

Petty (1988) reported results based on

combined knowledge across three areas: (a) identifying Mondale's and Reagan's positions on six issues, (b) identifying four political actors and their political parties, and (c) identifying three international people and places in the news at that time. (p. 270)

As with many studies in the field of political science, Sidanius and Lau (1989) extrapolated data for secondary analyses from the CPS National Election Study (1972) collected by the University of Michigan to tap the political knowledge variable. The authors used five questions to assess political knowledge including how many times a person can be elected president, the length of the terms of office for United States Senators and

members of the House of Representatives, and which party had the most members in the House of Representatives both before and after the election.

Neuman (1986) proposes a theory of political sophistication based on the conception of three publics: the apolitical, the mass public, and the "activists" (which many political scientists refer to as "elites" or "experts"). In his operationalization of sophistication, Neuman (1986) advocates combining demographic, political (including cognitive and behavioral), and psychological variables into a summed index. Specifically, Neuman (1986) identifies three broad sub-constructs that comprise sophistication which he names political salience, political knowledge, and political conceptualization (as elaborated on later in Chapter 5, Methodology).

Finally, Gaziano (1984) used open-ended questions to allow "respondents to define knowledge in their own way, thus minimizing bias interjected by the investigator [and to potentially reduce] the correlation between education and knowledge" (p. 561). Furthermore, the author operationalized the measurements as:

Awareness knowledge was mention of any specific fact about an issue. In-depth knowledge was a score computed by summing discrete elements of information, as determined by two judges, given in respondents' answers. (p. 560)

Agreeing with the Neuman (1986) position--as well as that of Lau & Erber (1985) and Lusk & Judd (1988)--that

sophistication measures should include multiple indicators, the current study bases its methodology on that perspective.

Political Discontent Perspectives

Definition and Components

Similar to the construct of sophistication, political discontent also has suffered from splintered conceptual and operational definitions within the political science community as well as a lack of clear-cut agreement on even what to call the phenomenon. Over time, the term "alienation" became popular with many scholars; too popular, in fact, because different researchers conceived of and measured it so differently. Addressing the political alienation nomenclature, Finifter (1972) concluded that "so many meanings have been attributed to this concept, many of them vague and mystical, that it verges on losing much of its scientific utility" (p. 3). Similarly, Abramson (1983) stated, "I attempt to avoid using the term 'alienation,' but it is impossible to avoid it completely because it is used so frequently by political-attitude researchers" (p. 207). And according to Seeman (1972), some people would propose "that we dispense with the word 'alienation' altogether. I would have little objection to that..." (p. 514). Likewise, Craig (1979) argued, "The concept of political alienation

has come to represent too many different ideas to too many scholars for it to suit the purposes of this study" (p. 5). Craig (1979) resolved the issue by adopting the term "political discontent" which he maintained "represents a more inclusive or generic term intended to encompass the variety of negative citizen evaluations..." (p. 5). Accordingly, the current study employs the same terminology.

Political scientists generally concur that the paradigm of political discontent consists of several constructs including political efficacy, political trust, and political cynicism. Originally, Campbell, Gurin, and Miller defined political efficacy as "the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process" (1954, p. 187). More recently, scholars have distinguished conceptually between "(1) internal efficacy, referring to beliefs about one's own competence to understand and to participate effectively in politics, and (2) external efficacy, referring to beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizen demands" (Craig, Neimi, & Silver, 1990, p. 290). Furthermore, some scholars suggest that external efficacy requires an additional conceptual division into regime-based efficacy--defined as "the expectation that conventional rules and

procedures for policy formation and implementation facilitate (rather than impede) citizen inputs" (Shingles, 1988, p. 7)--and incumbent-based efficacy which Shingles (1988) defines "in terms of beliefs about the motivation and the ability of incumbents to respond to citizen demands" (p. 5).

Political trust relates to the extent to which individual citizens see the government as "functioning and producing outputs in accord with individual expectations" (Miller, 1974, p. 952). Most political science scholars agree that political trust requires a further conceptual distinction. Easton (1975) defines regime-based trust (also referred to as "diffuse support") as "support that underlies the regime as a whole and the political community" (p. 445). Researchers on the subject of political discontent regard the other subdivision of trust as incumbent-based, and Miller's (1974) definition of trust cited earlier suffices as an adequate description of this phenomenon (p. 952). Finally, the opposite of trust (i.e., distrust) constitutes political cynicism (Erber & Lau, 1990).

Political Discontent in America

In terms of the gravity and importance of political distrust and cynicism, some scholars have argued that:

Distrust, or political 'cynicism,' confined to a minority of the electorate and a short period of

time, is arguably functional for a political system, since it may promote electoral and social change. It becomes problematic, however, when a majority of the electorate distrusts the government over an extended period of time. Prolonged discontent and alienation from the political system may challenge its legitimacy and, ultimately, its very existence. (Erber & Lau, 1990, p. 236)

Although Americans during the 1950s generally felt politically efficacious and held at least moderate levels of trust in government, that trust

steadily declined between the early 1960s and 1980. For example, in 1958, 78% of the electorate thought the government did what was right all or most of the time. This number had fallen to 53% in 1972 and to 33% in 1976 following Nixon's resignation. By 1980, only 25% of the electorate could be classified as trusting the government (Erber & Lau, 1990, p. 236-237).

During the Reagan administration, the trend in trust of the government reversed. "The proportion of respondents thinking the government does what is right all or most of the time rose to 33% in 1982 and to almost 45% in 1984" (Erber & Lau, 1990, p. 247). Explanations for this reversal range from satisfaction with a president perceived as competent to perceptions among the electorate that government began to play "a smaller role in their lives" (Erber & Lau, 1990, p. 247). Regardless of the cause(s) for the reversal, it seems noteworthy to point out that the 1984 figure still fell far short of the 78% recorded in 1958 and even 1972's 53%. In other words, even during a popular presidency a majority of Americans

still did not trust their government. Moreover, more recent analyses suggest a turnaround from the trend of increasing trust in government during the Reagan years. In 1980 for example, 46.3% of respondents in a national poll felt that "quite a few" of the people running the government were "a little crooked." By 1984, that figure had dropped to 30.7%, but the same polling organization found in 1988 that it had risen again to 39.9%.² The problem here becomes even more exacerbated when one considers that particular media usage patterns may play a role in the low trust phenomenon--the thesis of the current study.

Finally, with regard to operationalization, Seeman (1972) makes the argument that researchers should distinguish between and measure separately the constructs of political efficacy and political trust, and the current study takes that perspective also while maintaining that essentially tapping the political discontent construct requires only the use of regime-based efficacy and incumbent-based trust measures.

Racial Differences in Political Discontent

Rodgers (1974) has observed:

Only through alterations in the political fortunes of blacks can their feelings of political efficacy and political cynicism be shifted toward more supportive political attitudes. (p. 279)

In that vein, Abramson (1983) hypothesizes:

In social settings where blacks (and other disadvantaged subcultural groups) have higher levels of social opportunity, they should have higher feelings of political effectiveness (and political trust). Controlling for social opportunity should reduce or eliminate racial (and other subcultural) differences in these attitudes. (p. 156)

In other words, although most studies on the subject have shown blacks to feel less politically trusting and efficacious than whites, theoretically at least, these authors suggest that a community might exist where blacks might feel as trusting as (or even more trusting than) whites. One might expect just such a situation in a community where blacks generally felt well-represented in government and that they had easy access to the machinery of government. At least one empirical study, (Foster, 1978) supports this hypothesis.

Foster (1978) conducted a study testing political attitudes of black children in two communities with very different racial compositions: Peoria and East St. Louis, Illinois. At the time of the study, the former was a predominantly white community with a white mayor, while the latter city had exactly the opposite make-up. The study results showed that 80% of the black children in East St. Louis knew their mayor's name, while only 30% of their counterparts in Peoria demonstrated that knowledge. Moreover, 67% of the East St. Louis children thought that

their mayor (who also was black) was doing a good job. In Peoria, the comparable figure was 45% (and 58% for the white children). The results led Foster to conclude that "political reality structures black attitudes toward political objects" (p. 250. He further surmised:

It is plausible that blacks in East St. Louis do have the ability to influence their mayor, or at least believe they do. Thus, they may exhibit more trust in their black mayor. This sense of trust and benevolence is then conveyed from adults to children. (p. 249)

Emig (1990) found that adult black respondents gave local elected officials significantly higher evaluations than did white interviewees. In that regard, it seems noteworthy to mention that in the study community (at the time the research was conducted), blacks represented about 14% of the total population. At the same time, the City Council--consisting of five elected members--included two blacks, one of whom currently held the commission-elected position of mayor, giving blacks a representation rate of 40%. In addition, the commission-appointed city manager at the time also was black. The discussion now turns to the mass media and looks first at media effects research.

Media Effects

History of Effects Research

Lengthy and detailed accounts of mass communication's long history of effects research appear elsewhere

(DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989; Lowery & DeFleur, 1988; Chaffee & Hochheimer, 1985). Accordingly, this study does not attempt an exhaustive review of that subject. Suffice it to say here that interpretations of mass media effects moved from the notion of a powerful effects model that was assumed prior to the voting studies of the 1940s and 1950s (e.g., Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954; Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960), to the "limited effects" hypothesis (as summarized by Klapper, 1960), to the current perspective that mass media can have powerful effects under certain conditions (such as reflected in the work of Gerbner and his associates, 1971, 1976). The current investigation focuses on and concerns itself with some specific effects of media in relation to political communication.

Mass Media and Political Knowledge

The current study's hypotheses (presented in Chapter 4) rest on the postulate that more politically knowledgeable (i.e., sophisticated) individuals also will evince higher levels of political discontent than the less knowledgeable. Secondly, if people who rely more on newspapers than television for political information also emerge as more knowledgeable about politics, then that would forge an initial link between newspaper use and political cynicism. This section examines the evidence

supporting the proposition that the newspaper-reliant do demonstrate higher levels of political knowledge.

From the earliest research into the relationship between political affairs and media use, studies consistently have shown that those who rely primarily on television for political information evince lower levels of political knowledge than people who get most of their political information from print media. For example, Robinson and Davis (1989) conducted several probability telephone surveys and reported that "respondents who use and claim to depend on newspapers for most of their news emerge with consistently higher comprehension/information scores than those who depend on TV (whose scores remain average)" (p. 18). In that same study, the authors reviewed the results of 13 previous surveys (five national and eight local) conducted between 1963 and 1986 and--consistent with their own findings--concluded:

Most differences by amount of TV news viewing are either insignificant or in the wrong direction--i.e. lower comprehension scores among those who view TV newscasts or who claim TV newscasts to be their main information source. (p. 19)³

Other studies not included in the Robinson and Davis (1989) review come to the same conclusions. For example, Becker and Dunwoody (1982) measured respondents' knowledge of candidates in a local election in relation to their patterns of media use. Their results demonstrate:

The data show quite clearly that knowledge of the candidates was linked to use of the local newspapers and of radio news. Consistent with other recent research on media effectiveness, use of television does not show a zero-order association with knowledge of the candidates. These relationships hold even when education of the respondent is controlled. (p. 214)

Similarly, Becker, Sobowale, and Casey, Jr. (1979) determined, "It seems likely that media dependency would affect political knowledge on various levels" (p. 473). Their findings led them to observe:

Those persons who were heavily dependent on newspapers for the local information were found to be more knowledgeable about local government affairs than those persons not dependent on that medium. Persons dependent on television, on the other hand, were less knowledgeable than persons not television dependent. (p. 473)

Wagner (1983) discovered that "reading a newspaper, in contrast to watching television, increases the ability to discriminate between the candidates in a presidential election" (p. 426), although the author did not attempt to argue that "newspaper readers are more knowledgeable or more correct in their assessments than are television viewers" (pp. 426-427).

Finally, and most recently, Berkowitz and Pritchard (1989) found in a study conducted during a congressional election that "the only communication resource that was consistently related to political knowledge was newspapers" (p. 701). These authors also offered the following explanation for their finding:

Newspapers probably offer their audiences a greater quantity of factual information about local politics than do interpersonal communications or other mass media. (p. 701)

Graber (1988) also suggests an information-processing explanation (within the context of schema theory) which also takes media content and contexts into consideration in order to account for why television-dependent persons consistently demonstrate lower levels of political knowledge:

Schemata based largely on information gleaned from television tend to be less diverse than those based on print information. The relative paucity of political themes in the average television story, the rushed mode of delivery, and the difficulty of schematizing visual information all may be responsible. (p. 189)

Graber's (1988) findings have important implications for the current study. First, to the extent that political knowledge represents an indication--albeit just one indication--of political sophistication, then the relationship between that latter construct and newspaper reliance becomes critical to several of the study's hypotheses. Secondly, if media use and sophistication do correlate, and it also proves true that sophistication and political discontent correlate as well, then the connection between media use and political discontent (or cynicism) emerges as relatively clear and equally important to several more of the study's hypotheses. Some writers have observed that "the enhanced negative flavor

of press commentary may contribute to increasing cynicism and alienation" (Graber, 1976, p. 289). Such a linkage would gain additional salience if significant content and contextual differences, as suggested in the Graber (1988) citation above, exist between newspapers and television in terms of political communication--the subject of the next section.

Media Content and Context Differences

This section extends the discussion regarding newspapers' more negative (compared to television) coverage of political news by first examining the empirical evidence that such greater negativity does exist. After presenting that evidence, the author then turns to a consideration of how such negativity might impact on people's subsequent evaluations of attitude objects in an effort to forge an important second link between newspaper use and political discontent.

Kinder and Sears (1985) have suggested that "sources of news that develop and maintain a particular slant may eventually nudge their audience in the same direction" (p. 713). Robinson (1976) tied his "videomalaise" hypothesis to the notion that a basically critical and negative news source would "cultivate" cynicism in its audience. Robinson, however, based his thesis on the assumption that television represented a more critical and

negative medium than newspapers (although his experimentation dealt only with television and did not compare print media). If, on the other hand, empirical evidence emerged demonstrating that print media (e.g., newspapers) turned out to be more negative than television in their content representations, then, as Graber (1976) has stated, "The frequent claims that television is responsible for the public's disillusionment with government may therefore require re-examination" (p. 289).

Testing the "Videomalaise" Hypothesis

According to Robinson (1976), "Television journalism does cause frustration, cynicism, self-doubt, and malaise" (p. 425). (One should take note that Robinson's hypothesis was based on empirical results and did not proceed from any theoretical perspective. Neither did the author offer any theoretical explanation for his findings.) Other than Robinson's own reports (1975, 1976, 1977; Robinson and Zukin, 1976), the "videomalaise" hypothesis has evoked mixed support. For example, Lau and Erber (1985) questioned whether Robinson's thesis might explain one of their findings that "if we again assume that [political] novices chiefly are watching television, do we have some evidence that they are suffering from Robinson's (1976) 'videomalaise'?" (p. 60). Becker, Sobowale, and Casey (1979) and Becker and Whitney (1980)

found that the effects of media dependency on political trust (as indicated by evaluations of elected officials) held only at the local level, and even there the relationships appeared slight and somewhat inconsistent. On the other hand, O'Keefe (1980) had to conclude from his study that "there is no direct evidence that greater television reliance evokes political discontent or malaise on the part of viewers" (p. 127). In fact, the author suggested that television reliance "may lead to the opposite" (p. 125) result.

Emig (1990) took a theoretical perspective consistent with O'Keefe's suggestion (i.e., that lower levels of political knowledge, such as those found among the television-reliant, should lead to lower--not higher--levels of political cynicism and vice versa). The study focused on how closely people reported following local government and public affairs in relation to their patterns of media use and their evaluations of local elected officials' leadership. Specifically, the study examined two media-use configurations. The first (labeled "News/TV") consisted of people who reported using newspapers "a lot" while using television "less than a lot" (i.e., "sometimes," "only now and then," "hardly ever," or "never") to follow what goes on in local government and local public affairs. The second

group (just the opposite) was composed of people who reported using television "a lot" while using newspapers "less than a lot" to follow what goes on and carried the designation "TV/News." In the study community, media outlets included one daily local newspaper, one network (ABC) affiliated television station, and one university-operated public broadcasting television station. Additionally, subscribers to the local cable television company were able to receive the signals of other stations affiliated with NBC and CBS along with a local community access channel with their basic subscriptions. Extended cable services provided access to other national news networks including CNN and another public broadcasting station.

The Emig (1990) study assumptions included: 1) how closely people report following what goes on in the public arena reflects their relative levels of awareness and knowledge, 2) people who use newspapers more than television to follow what goes on in local government and local public affairs know more about those subjects than those who use television more than newspapers, and 3) evaluations of elected officials' leadership represent varying degrees of political cynicism with lower evaluations related to higher levels of cynicism. The study employed a telephone survey using random-digit dialing and produced

517 valid, completed interviews. About midway through the interviews, respondents were asked to evaluate the leadership of the city's elected public officials.⁴ Then, near the end of the interview, another question asked how closely respondents follow local government and local public affairs.⁵ The media-use questions came last.⁶

As hypothesized, those who reported following local politics "most of the time" appeared significantly more likely to give unfavorable ratings of local elected officials than those who follow what goes on locally less often. This pattern seemed consistent with the theoretical perspective, which underpinned the study's hypotheses, that the most unfavorable evaluations of local officials emanate from those who follow politics the most, and the statistical analysis supported hypothesis one. A regression analysis produced a significance of [$F(1,320) = 14.8, p < .0001$], and a test of linearity also showed significance with $F(1) = 14.7, p < .0001$. In all statistical tests of hypotheses, significance levels held after controlling for all demographic variables.

A second hypothesis in the Emig (1990) study predicted that the News/TV group would report following what goes on in local government and local public affairs to a significantly greater degree than the TV/News group.

A regression analysis for that hypothesis also showed significance with $F(1,205) = 35.5$, $p < .0001$, providing statistical support for the hypothesis. The study's third hypothesis predicted that the TV/Newspaper group would evaluate elected officials significantly more favorably than the Newspaper/TV group. The regression analysis outcome produced $F(1) = 10.48$, $p < .002$ in support of the hypothesis. At the same time, the study did suffer from certain limitations.

First, the use of local elected officials' evaluations as the only surrogate for that element of political discontent known as incumbent-based trust causes concern and seems somewhat problematic. With regard to public officials' evaluations, it seems noteworthy to mention that the study investigator did not employ the University of Michigan's National Election Study's incumbent-based trust questions, mostly because of instrument space and time constraints. Another factor of consideration was related to the debate about the validity and reliability of those measurements within the political science community.⁷ Similar to the concern about the evaluations of local officials, one also must seriously question the assumption that how closely people report following what goes on in local government and local public affairs is an adequate measurement of their political knowledge.

Another question arising from the Emig (1990) study asks whether similar findings would emerge from a different level of analysis. For example, would a focus on the national (as opposed to local) level produce the same results?

Finally, the Emig (1990) study also did not address a third media-use group that emerged. That group included those people who responded that they use both newspapers and television "a lot" to follow what goes on locally, and it represented about a third of the total sample ($n = 126$). In terms of how closely those individuals reported following local affairs and their evaluations of local elected officials, they appeared to fall about halfway between the two media-use groups described earlier. For instance, 55.6% of these people said that they follow what goes on "most of the time" (compared to 79% of the News/TV group and 25% of the TV/News users). In regard to evaluations of elected officials, 48% gave unfavorable responses, 44% said favorable, and 8% had no opinion. (For the News/TV and TV/News groups, comparable favorable-unfavorable ratings were 34.9% to 65.1% and 70.4% to 29.6%, respectively.) Why did this group differ so markedly from the other two media-use groups on these dependent variables? To explore that question, the author conducted a post-hoc demographic analysis of the

three groups. No significant differences emerged between the two media-use groups analyzed in the study (as expected, given that significance levels did not rise while controlling for demographics). Some important differences did appear, however, between those who reported using both newspapers and television "a lot" and the other two media-use groups. For example, the former individuals tended to have resided in the city for longer periods of time, had higher voter registration and voting percentages, and had lower reported household incomes. The most perplexing result, however, related to ethnicity. While blacks represented 8.3% in the Newspaper/TV group and 7.9% of TV/Newspaper respondents, they accounted for 27% of the population who reported using both newspapers and television "a lot." Furthermore, as mentioned previously, blacks differed substantially from non-blacks on the dependent variable measurements, tending to register more favorable evaluations of elected officials and to report following what goes on locally less often. Blacks also differed among themselves on the dependent variables based on which media-use group they fell into, although those small cell sizes precluded any sort of valid analysis. In consideration of the foregoing, the author concluded a need for further research, and the current study emanated from that recognition.

Newspaper Negativity

So far, studies testing the greater negativity of newspapers hypothesis have relied primarily on content analyses. Graber (1976) content analyzed 20 newspapers for their coverage of the 1968 presidential campaign and compared those with 1972 coverage. The papers were selected to reflect

regional differences, variations in community size, political idiosyncrasies linked to partisan factors, or to the amount of control which a particular paper has over the market in its region. (p. 286)

The researcher also content analyzed early evening national news presented by all three major networks during the same 30-day period just prior to the election for comparison. Between the two election years, for the newspapers in the sample, "negative assessments by the press increased sharply as time went on" (p. 289). In the 1972 campaign, the author notes:

It is also important that the tenor of discussion on television was substantially more positive than in the press. For 1972, for instance, 52% of television commentary on qualifications of the candidates was positive, compared to 36% of press commentary. (p. 189)

The author concluded:

Stress on negative qualities of all the candidates with major headlines going to the most damaging accusations, may be partially responsible for the large number of voters who have decided to stay away from the polls in recent presidential elections. (p. 301)

The obvious implication here, of course, relates to the fact that many observers have identified low voter

turnout as a symptom of political discontent. Graber (1980) also reported similar results from a study of the 1976 presidential election campaign. In a later report of the year-long panel study conducted during the 1976 election year, Graber (1988) stated (with respect to the Chicago Tribune):

Typically, there was heavy emphasis on negative aspects of the characteristics of the candidates and the quality of their policy proposals. The consequences must be interpreted in light of the fact that people are more apt to believe and remember the bad than the good. Only 45% of the comments publicized in Tribune stories were positive. (p. 79)

In the same study, Graber (1988) observed that "the most constant element in processing stories about government activities was the assumption, nourished by a multitude of [print] media stories that government is inefficient" (p. 208). Other researchers also have made discoveries bearing close resemblance to those of Graber. For example, Neuman (1986) cited several studies (e.g., Hofstetter's 1975 report to American Enterprise Institute) to conclude, "Newspapers tend to be more negative than television in their election coverage" (p. 142).

The Consequences of Negative News

Studies on this subject emanate from a broader and richer research methodology including experimentation and survey research as well as content analysis. The first study cited comes from a social-psychological experiment

and demonstrates the effect that negative versus positive information can have on individuals' subsequent evaluations of others. Rothman and Birrell (1977) demonstrated that the type of information (e.g., negative or positive) communicated to people mediates individuals' impressions and judgments of others. In an experimental setting, the same photograph of a man's face was presented to three groups of subjects. One group received a biographical sketch of the man stating that he formerly served in the Nazi Gestapo where he carried out barbaric medical experiments on Jewish concentration camp internees (the negative condition). The researchers gave the second group a sketch describing the man as an anti-Nazi underground leader who helped save thousands of Jewish lives (the positive manipulation). The control group received only the photograph with no additional information. Subjects in the negative condition judged the man's photographic expression as cruel and frowning, while the positive condition group saw the man as warm and kindly. Judgments by those in the control group were normally distributed, and all results showed statistically significant differences.

Byrne (1971) proposed the reinforcement-affect model of attraction. According to Veitch and Griffitt (1976), a major implication of that model "is that the more

pleasant the affective state of the individual, the more positive will be his interpersonal evaluations" (p. 69). Obviously, the implication holds for the opposite situation (i.e., that negative states will produce negative evaluations) because "it follows from this proposition that any variable which influences the affective state of an individual will also influence his interpersonal evaluations" (Veitch & Griffitt, 1976, p. 69). In a test of the model, Veitch and Griffitt (1976) presented both "good news" and "bad news" broadcasts to two groups of subjects and then asked them to first report on their affective state and then to make evaluation judgments about "anonymous strangers." Those subjects exposed to the "bad news" manipulation expressed more negative feelings and also gave evaluation ratings of others as "less desirable than subjects who had listened to 'good news'" (p. 73). Similarly, "those subjects who reported more positive affect following the ["good"] news broadcast also made more positive evaluations of anonymous strangers" (p. 73).

In another study comparing readers' reactions to news stories in 94 newspapers with their feelings of political trust and efficacy, Miller, Goldenberg, and Erbring (1979) found "a significant effect of media criticism on both cynicism and inefficacy that is independent

of either policy dissatisfaction or support for the incumbent" (p. 78). The authors also stated:

Readers of papers containing a higher degree of negative criticism directed at politicians and political institutions were more distrustful of government, and also somewhat more likely to believe that the government was unresponsive, than were readers of newspapers containing less criticism. (p. 80)

The effects of negative media coverage on attitudes become even more acute when one brings the matter of political interest into the picture. As Kazee (1981) reports, "Persons of low political interest are more likely to be influenced by the media to change political attitudes" (p. 515). And according to Neuman (1986), this would include most of the electorate because he (Neuman) estimates that up to 75% of the population "are marginally attentive to politics" (p. 170), and perhaps another 20% are what he terms "apolitical" (p. 170).

Impression Formation Studies

Additional empirical support for the thesis advanced here comes from consumer research and the "impression formation" literature. For example, Tims, Fan, and Freeman (1989) content analyzed news stories about the economy over a 20-month period and then compared whether the stories were favorable or unfavorable (in terms of the country's economic condition) with succeeding measures of consumer confidence from the University of Michigan's Index of Consumer Sentiment. Results

demonstrated that changes in consumer confidence followed changes in the news environment, and the authors concluded that "the message environment plays a major role in cultivating perceptions of social conditions" (p. 767).

Negativity Bias

Within the impression formation literature, consistent findings of a "negativity bias" strongly relate to the current study's theoretical perspective. As Kanouse (1984) observes, "One of the most important [findings] is that people tend to weigh negative information more heavily than positive information" (p. 703). Kanouse (1984) also states, "Negative information is more likely than positive information to have an enduring effect" (p. 703), a perspective consistent with Graber's (1988) observation that people will remember bad news more than good news (as discussed earlier). Formally, Wegner (1984) refers to this phenomenon as "impression perseverance" (p. 695), originally observed by Ross, Lepper, and Hubbard (1975).

In general, therefore, Kanouse (1984) posits:

When people combine information, they weigh negative information more heavily than positive; i.e., that the whole is evaluated more negatively than the average of its parts. (p. 703)

The fact that the negativity bias represents a truly judgmental phenomenon (Birnbaum, 1974) also bears impor-

tant relevance to the current study. The connection between the negativity bias and the media (particularly print media) emerges from Kanouse's (1984) comment:

When information about an object comes through the opinions or recommendations of another person, negative information may be more credible than positive information. (p. 705)

Obviously, the news media well could fit the definition of "another person" in this sense. An important related empirical result (Richey, Koenigs, Richey, & Fortin, 1975) in the negativity bias studies found that "a single report of a person's negative behavior outweighed five positive behaviors" (Klebbba & Unger, 1983, p. 12). The obvious implications here for individuals' judgments and evaluations of political actors go without saying.

Finally, Wegner (1984) investigated the "innuendo effect" as employed by the media with respect to both negative and positive information. Based on his findings, Wegner (1984) suggests that media's use of innuendo may have more powerful effects on people's evaluations of others than direct, outright statements. And the effect held for both negative and positive innuendo statements. As Wegner (1984) states:

The potentially greater salience of negative than positive information did not seem to make a difference. Innuendoes about positive features of people were just as influential as those about negative features. (p. 694)

To the extent that various media might engage in making innuendoes about political actors, coupled with the empirical findings that newspapers generally cover politics from a negative perspective (while television generally emerges as positive in this regard), then the effect of innuendoes made by the two different media might help explain why the newspaper reliant would reflect more negative evaluations (and the television-reliant more positive ones) of political actors, events, and institutions.

Single Versus Multiple Media Use

The final mass media subject discussed here relates to how communication scientists have defined and measured media use. For example, concentrated attention on the "main source" question may have led some previous uses and gratifications researchers to draw inappropriate conclusions. As Gaziano (1990) has observed:

The majority of researchers have contrasted television dependent persons with newspaper dependent persons (usually mutually exclusive groups), discarding all other respondents in the resulting analysis. (p. 2)

Disagreeing with this approach, she also points out that "the functions of television and newspapers are often complementary, and some people are fans of both media equally" (p. 12). Along those lines, Robinson and Levy (1986) also criticize the single medium approach that the "main source" question encourages, stating:

The basic main source question is improperly asked, inappropriate to the subject matter, unable to be answered accurately, and, at best, worded ambiguously. Moreover, several studies have shown it simply does not hold true for local news. (p. 8)

Other scholars also take exception to the practice of focusing on a single medium as a main or preeminent source of news. For example, Bogart (1985) states, "The issue of preeminence is itself meaningless in a society where half the public is exposed daily both to newspapers and to television news" (p. 719). Similarly, Yum and Kendall (1988) "demonstrated that people get their information on state presidential primaries from a variety of sources rather than exclusively from television or newspapers" (p. 151). In that study the authors reported:

More than 80% [of the respondents] said that they relied on both television and newspapers for political information, with over a third of the respondents (39%) relying upon three or more different media sources. (p. 151)

Also stressing the complementary nature of mass media, Faber, Reese, and Steeves (1985) suggest:

A closer examination of individual information needs and satisfactions with available media may explain more profitably information-seeking behavior and source utilization as well as the outcomes of using different media. (p. 449)

Also, in her year-long panel study, Graber (1988) reported:

When it came to recalling the sources of political information, nearly all of the panelists named a com-

bination that included print and electronic media as well as personal experiences and conversations. (p. 227)

Finally, Bogart (1989) reviewed the results of changes in television viewership during the New York newspaper strike in 1977 to determine whether people would flock to television news as a substitute for their missing newspapers and found that "in the absence of the major newspapers, the public did not turn in massive numbers to TV news as a substitute" (p. 251). The author also suggests as an explanation for the finding "that the unavailability of the newspapers may have desensitized normal interests, especially in local news" (p. 251). Such an explanation, if valid, would offer indirect support to the position that the media are, indeed, complementary and that many (if not most) people are accustomed to a multiple-media consumption pattern. Accordingly, the current study employs a multiple-media approach as set forth in Chapter 5, Methodology.

Conclusions

During this chapter's discussion, several major arguments have emerged: 1) although political knowledge represents the most important component of sophistication, measurement of the constructs also include political interest and concern as well as involvement (behavior/participation), 2) researchers can essentially tap

political discontent using measures of regime-based external efficacy combined with incumbent-based trust, 3) "political reality" (e.g., perceived power structure differences) can account for racial differences in political discontent, 4) different levels of analysis (e.g., local versus national) can produce different results in terms of political discontent among different racial groups, 5) negative information about a political object in the media contributes to negative evaluations of that object by consumers, 6) print media disseminate more--and more negative--information than electronic media, 7) people who rely more on newspapers possess more--and more negative--information than those who rely more on television, and 8) media-use measurements should take a multiple-media approach as opposed to a solely single-medium (or "main source") perspective. Hypotheses based on these arguments follow in Chapter 4.

Notes

1. Italics in the original
2. American National Election Studies, University of Michigan, 1980-88.
3. In their paper presented to the Mass Communication Division of the International Communication Association in San Francisco, Robinson & Davis (1989) cited specifically the studies of Becker & Whitney (1980), Clarke & Fredin (1978), Edelstein (1974), Kennamer (1983), Patterson (1980), Patterson & McClure (1976), Robinson (1967, 1972, 1974, 1986), and Robinson & Levy (1983).

4. The actual question was: "How would you rate the leadership of elected city officials, that is, the city commission? Would you say it is excellent, good, fair, or poor?"

5. Specifically, the question was worded as: "Some people seem to follow what's going on in local government and local public affairs most of the time, while others are not that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in local government and local public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, hardly at all, or never?"

6. Media-use questions were introduced with the statement: "People learn about local government and local public affairs in different ways. I'm going to read you a list of some of those sources of information. For each, would you tell me whether you use that source a lot, some, only now and then, hardly ever, or never in finding out about local government and local public affairs. What about newspapers - do you read newspapers a lot, some, only now and then, hardly ever, or never to learn about local government and local public affairs?" (An identically worded question then was asked for television, radio, and interpersonal communication.)

7. For example, see Abramson and Finifter (1981); Citrin (1974); Craig (1979b); Craig and Maggiotto (1982); Craig, Neimi, and Silver (1990); Feldman (1983); D. Hill (1981); K. Hill (1982); Miller (1979); Weatherford (1987).

CHAPTER 4 ASSUMPTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The study's major underlying assumptions are:

1. Statistical and testable relationships exist between patterns of media use, political sophistication, and political discontent.

2. Under varying conditions, both ethnicity and level of analysis (i.e., local or national focus) act as intervening and mediating variables on these relationships.

The discussion begins with a consideration of the ways people use media (specifically newspapers and television) to obtain information, especially political information, within the context of basic assumptions postulated about such media use. The comparison of people's use of newspapers with television for information suggests six possible patterns of usage: 1) high use of newspapers combined with low use of television, 2) high use of television combined with low use of newspapers, 3) high use of both media, 4) low use of both media, 5) moderate use of both media, and 6) exclusive use of a single medium. Possibly because of both the conceptual and operational difficulties in attempting to distinguish between moderate and low users of media, most researchers

have ignored the former in favor of studying the polar extremes of high and low media use, dependency, reliance, and so forth, and the current study does not depart from this perspective. Additionally, moderate users of media--if they could be defined and identified--probably represent the least interesting and least fruitful line of scholarly inquiry among the various other usage patterns. Likewise, in two studies cited previously which advocated a multiple-media approach to the study of media use (Gaziano, 1990; Wagner, 1983), those respondents who reported using one medium exclusively were completely ignored. In the Emig (1990) study, only 5.1% of the total sample (3.2% for newspapers and 1.9% for television) stated that they relied on one and only one medium for obtaining information about local government and local public affairs. Accordingly, the discussion here focuses on the other four media-use groups.

Although, as reported in Footnote 1 of Chapter 1, Gaziano (1990) employed a conceptual scheme for defining media-use groups comparable to that of Emig (1990), some important differences arose between the two studies in terms of findings. Those differences, along with some attention to possible explanations for them, warrant some consideration here. The first major difference related

to people who fell into the low dependency group for both newspapers and television, and the majority of Gaziano's (1990) sample (56.3%) emerged in that category. Of the 373 respondents in the Emig (1990) study, only 84 individuals (22.5%) reported low-to-moderate use of both media. (Wagner [1983] found only 12% so classified in a cross-sectional secondary analysis of national data.) Other comparisons, with the Emig (1990) figures shown in parentheses, indicate Gaziano (1990) found that as a percentage of the total sample, respondents in the high newspaper/low television group represented 14% (29.2%); those in the high television-low newspaper group 17% (27.1%); the combination of these two groups equalling 31% (56.3%); and high dependence on both media amounted to 9% (33%). Several factors may explain such wide variance in results between two studies using essentially the same configurations for media-use patterns.

First, the units of analysis varied. Gaziano (1990) included all news and information in her study, while Emig (1990) focused only on government and public affairs news. Similarly, Gaziano (1990) employed a multiple-level of analysis including both local and national news; Emig (1990) looked only at the local level. Also, Gaziano (1990) used a national sample, whereas Emig (1990) relied on only local respondents. Finally, opera-

tional definitions varied in that Gaziano (1990) measured media dependence (using some of the traditional questions found in the uses and gratifications literature) with a primary focus on how much respondents would miss each medium if it should suddenly disappear. On the other hand, Emig (1990) asked only how much respondents used each medium (i.e., a lot, some, only now and then, hardly ever, or never). The foregoing leads to the first statements of assumptions with regard to media use in the current study:

1. A wide range of findings on the percentages of individuals who report being low in dependence on both newspapers and television, coupled with the fact that the current study concerns itself more with higher media usage in relation to both political sophistication and political discontent, renders the low in both media dependency group as of no interest here.
2. Differences in findings between the Gaziano (1990) and Emig (1990) studies--possibly due to the methodological differences discussed above--do not invalidate the similarities of media-use patterns that the two studies share.
3. Within the context of the current study, therefore, the author assumes that, for the specific subject of news about government and public affairs, only three media-use groups require consideration: News/TV, TV/News, and High Both (as described and defined in Chapter 1).

Several additional media-use assumptions emanate from some of the theoretical perspectives explored in Chapter 2 and the empirical evidence presented in Chapter 3. For example, Graber (1988) discovered "each news

source may leave a somewhat different information imprint on the minds of its audiences" (p. 73). Graber (1988) also reported that many of the panelists in her study "routinely accepted personality judgments made by third parties and conveyed through the media..." (p. 302). It also appears that newspapers' longer term role as an adversary of government may contribute to perceptions of their more negative coverage of politics. The assumptions in this regard, therefore, include:

4. Different news sources have differential effects on their audiences.

5. Especially with regard to politics, most people appear quite ready to accept media's social construction of reality.

6. Long term exposure to media leads to cultivation of what Morgan and Signorielle (1990) term "mainstream" political meanings in people's schemata for politics, and such social constructions of reality differ according to which medium an individual relies on primarily.

The foregoing leads to a statement of the current study's first hypothesis:

H1: Overall, respondents in the study will judge newspapers to be more critical in their coverage of politics than television.

The next set of assumptions (again based on theoretical perspectives and empirical findings) connects media use to the construct of political sophistication. For example, the author makes the following assumptions:

1. People actively receive information from the media, and their cognitive components represent both

prior learning (their schemata) and assimilation of new information into those schemata.

2. People who rely primarily on newspapers for political information possess more information-holding about politics than those who rely primarily on television.

3. Political knowledge-holding constitutes the most important element of political sophistication below a certain threshold (i.e., the top 10 percentile) of sophistication.

If the foregoing assumptions that exposure to different media lead to differing levels of knowledge which, consequently, lead to varying degrees of political sophistication hold true, then it seems feasible to hypothesize a hierarchal relationship between media-use patterns and political sophistication:

H2: Respondents in the News/TV groups will evince significantly higher levels of political sophistication than those in the High Both groups who, in turn, will evince significantly higher levels of political sophistication than those in the TV/News groups.

The next hypotheses relate to black-white differences in political trust and efficacy at the local level of analysis. As Abramson (1977) suggested--and Foster (1978) demonstrated--contrary to the majority of findings elsewhere, blacks might emerge as more politically trusting and efficacious than whites in a community where they perceive that they have fair and adequate representation along with more access to the machinery of government. As previously discussed, the study community

is one where blacks are well-represented in city government. This perspective, therefore, guides the next four hypotheses:

- H3: Overall, at the local level, whites will register higher degrees of political discontent than blacks.
- H4: Within the News/TV group, at the local level, whites will register higher degrees of political discontent than blacks.
- H5: Within the TV/News group, at the local level, whites will register higher degrees of political discontent than blacks.
- H6: Within the High Both group, at the local level, whites will register higher levels of political discontent than blacks.

As previously discussed, people's cognitions structure their behaviors, including their evaluations of others. A related topic revolves around media's role in the social construction of reality in that the media create criteria for the construction of political value-frames including people's evaluations of political actors, events, issues, and institutions. To the extent that higher levels of political sophistication lead to greater degrees of political discontent, people who rely primarily on newspapers for political information should evince higher degrees of political discontent. The same should hold true for people in the High Both group, relative to the TV/News group, because their comparatively greater exposure to newspapers should override their tel-

evision exposure. In other words, the "negativity bias" discussed in Chapter 3 should come into play here, and, as with political sophistication, the same hierarchal relationship should emerge. And the pattern also should hold regardless of race. That is, more politically sophisticated blacks should feel just as much political discontent as their white counterparts, even at the local level, which leads to the next hypothesis:

- H7: At the local level, respondents in the News/TV groups will evince significantly higher levels of political discontent than those in the High School groups. Both groups who, in turn, will evince significantly higher levels of political discontent than those in the TV/News groups.

Moving to the national level of analysis, the political discontent picture between blacks and whites should reverse and look more like the findings of so many other studies. In other words, Abramson's (1977) political-reality explanation should apply here if it should prove true that blacks view the national government as less responsive to their needs, feel less represented at that level, and have less access to the bureaucracy than do whites. Therefore, the next set of hypotheses are:

- H8: Overall, at the national level, blacks will register higher degrees of political discontent than whites.
- H9: Within the News/TV groups, at the national level, blacks will register higher degrees of political discontent than whites.

H10: Within the TV/News groups, at the national level, blacks will register higher degrees of political discontent than whites.

H11: Within the High Both groups, at the national level, blacks will register higher degrees of political discontent than whites.

Level of analysis should make no difference, however, in between-group comparisons of media use. In other words, the particular type of media use should drive the political sophistication and political discontent constructs without regard to racial differences at the national as well as local levels. It follows, therefore, that:

H12: At the national level, respondents in the News/TV groups will evince significantly higher levels of political discontent than those in the High Both groups who, in turn, will evince significantly higher levels of political discontent than those in the TV/News groups.

The next chapter explores the methodology used to test the 12 hypotheses proposed here.

CHAPTER 5 METHOD

Subjects

In this study, type of media use (News/TV, TV/News, and High Both) constitutes the three media independent variables, each with two levels for race (black and non-black) and two levels of analyses (local and national). In order to assure an equal number of blacks and non-blacks in each of the cells, the researcher used a quota sample to select subjects on the basis of their age (over 18), geographical area of residence (living within the city limits of Gainesville), non-college attendance, and patterns of media use to obtain political information. To enhance the chances of not encountering college students, interviews were conducted during the first and last weekends of the university's nine-day break between summer terms (June 21-23 and 28-30, 1991), although only the black interviewers worked on the first weekend. With the approval and cooperation of the management at one of the area's larger shopping malls, tables and chairs were set up at two separate locations inside the mall. The paid interviewers visually screened prospective respondents on the basis of race and sex and then verbally

screened them on age, residence, and non-college attendance. As an incentive, potential respondents were told by the interviewers during the introduction that if they were eligible (i.e., if they "passed" the screening questions) they would receive their choice of a "scratch-off" State of Florida lottery ticket or a one-dollar bill in return for a completed written questionnaire. During the pre-interview screening, interviewers first verified each prospective respondent's age, residence, and non-college attendance. They then asked prospective respondents, "In terms of obtaining information about government and public affairs, how important are newspapers to you? Please use a scale of 1 to 10 to answer the question where one means they are not important to you at all, and 10 represents that they are extremely important to you." An identical question then was posed for television. Individuals who rated newspapers between seven and 10 but ranked television as six or less were placed in the "News/TV" cell. Those who responded seven to 10 for television and six or less for newspapers comprised the "TV/News" group. Finally, respondents who answered seven to 10 for both media constituted the "High Both" group. After any cell became filled, and a prospective respondent gave answers which would necessitate their

being placed in that filled cell, interviewers informed the person that we already had all of the people we needed with their particular media-use pattern and thanked them for their time.

Although a pre-study power analysis (Cohen, 1977) with $u = 1$ degrees of freedom, power ($1-B = .90$), significance ($\alpha = .05$), and "medium" effects size ($f = .25$) revealed the requirement of 42 subjects for each of the cells, interviewing experience soon revealed the near impossibility of attaining those numbers within the allotted time period. The major difficulties encountered by the interviewers were 1) getting black prospects to agree to participate and 2) finding blacks who rated newspapers higher than television. As a result, the researcher lowered the target to 30 cases per cell for a total N of 180, and the significance level was changed to .1.

To elaborate, after the black interviewers had logged 13 interviewer hours (during the second weekend), they had garnered less than 50 completed interviews. The white interviewers obtained 97 completed interviews within six interviewer hours and then spent four hours helping the blacks to reach a total of 88 completed questionnaires. In all, the interviewers made a total of 1,304 contacts (472 whites and 832 blacks) to obtain the 185 completions. Of these, four whites later were ex-

cluded because their written responses to the media-use questions placed them in a low use category (i.e., six or less for both newspapers and television on the 1 to 10 scale), even though they verbally had responded with a 7 or more to at least one of the media screening questions. Four black questionnaires also were discarded on the basis of obvious "response set" replies throughout the instruments. Table 5-1 shows how the remaining 93 white and 84 black respondents were distributed in terms of media-use groupings. As mentioned previously, the lowest cell (22) contains blacks who rated newspapers higher than television. Table 5-2 displays percentage breakdowns for the various non-response categories.

TABLE 5-1
Media Use Groupings by Race

	Whites	Blacks
News/TV	31	22
TV/News	30	30
High Both	32	32
	—	—
Totals	93	84

TABLE 5-2
Completion and Nonresponse Rates by Race

	Whites	Blacks
Completed Interviews	97 (20.5%)	88 (10.6%)
Did Not Finish	2 (.4%)	5 (.5%)
College Student	41 (8.6%)	20 (2.4%)
Under 18 Years Old	8 (2.0%)	22 (2.7%)
Low Media Use	17 (4.0%)	35 (4.2%)
Non-Gainesville	112 (23.3%)	215 (25.8%)
Refused	195 (41.2%)	447 (53.8%)
Totals	472 (100.0%)	832 (100.0%)

In terms of sample demographics, the average age was 39, females represented 65%, 31% were either professionals or managers, 10.7% were homemakers, 13.6% were retired, 14.7% held clerical jobs, 10.8% were sales or craft workers, and 2.3% were unemployed. The average number of years lived in Gainesville was 15.2, and 60 years was the longest. The average education level was between vocational or technical school and a two-year

college degree; 34.4% had at least a college degree. Most respondents (68.4%) regarded themselves as permanent residents of the area, while 14.7% were unsure. The average annual household income was \$20,000-\$25,000. Finally, in terms of political demographics, 83.6% said they were registered to vote, 63.8% reported voting in the 1991 city election, 68.4% said they had voted in the last presidential election held in 1988, and 59.9% expressed a preference for the Democratic Party. On social issues the largest response category (43.5%) was "sometimes liberal and sometimes conservative" (conservatives outnumbered liberals by 32.4% to 21.5%), and the same pattern emerged on economic issues with figures of 45.8%, 37.3%, and 15.9% respectively.

The Procedure

The paid interviewers attended a one-hour training session to prepare them for their assignment during which they received detailed instructions on how to proceed. Specifically, they were instructed to approach prospective participants in a courteous, polite, and friendly manner with the opening statement:

We are conducting a survey about how people use newspapers and television as part of a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Florida. If you agree to participate, you'll receive your choice of either a "scratch off" lottery ticket or one dollar in cash. We will not ask for your name--the survey is anonymous. There is a questionnaire that takes about

10-15 minutes to fill out. First, let me ask you a few questions to be sure that you're eligible to participate.

After the screening questions previously described, interviewers gave respondents an informed consent form stating that participation was voluntary, that no perceived risks were involved, and that the respondents could opt to not participate or to terminate their participation at any time. The form also contained a brief description of the research project and included the name, address, and telephone number of the principal investigator in the event that respondents had any additional questions. Respondents then were handed the written questionnaire to complete. At the conclusion of the interview, respondents were given their choice of an incentive as described above. Interviewers also were instructed to alternate interviewees between males and females. They also were cautioned to not "load" the sample with older respondents in an effort to avoid possibly encountering college students. Additionally, the interviewers were responsible for recording each respondent's sex and race on the same cover sheet that contained the screening questions. The cover sheet also was used as a tracking device to quickly tabulate the number of individuals in each of the six research groups. Finally, interviewers were instructed to record their nonresponses using the categories reported in Table 5-2. For each

completed written questionnaire, interviewers were compensated at the rate of two dollars.

Apparatus

The investigator developed and pretested the survey instrument during May 1991 with 38 students in a political science course at the university in order to both assess the average length of time required to complete the questionnaire and to detect any question ambiguities. Although none of the students expressed any difficulty with the instrument, a later analysis of their responses revealed that the placement of an item asking about media-use activities early in the questionnaire might have contributed to overestimations by the respondents in terms of those activities. The investigator's interpretation of these results seems consistent with the Bishop (1981) finding regarding question placement (as discussed later in the section under Assessing Knowledge). Accordingly, that question was moved to a section following political knowledge inquiries in an effort to reduce such overreporting.

Most of the questions in the instrument were adopted from other previous studies in order to enhance their reliability estimates and their validity.

Measuring Media Use

First, the screening question on media use described above provided one indication of each respondent's over-

all media-use pattern. Additionally, other media-use questions were posed in the self-administered written questionnaire. Specifically, respondents were asked how important both newspapers and television are to them for information about government and public affairs. The questions were posed for both local and national government, and responses were recorded on a 1 to 10 scale. It seems noteworthy to point out that the format for these questions varied from that used in the previous study reported in Chapter 1 where the response categories included "a lot," "some," "only now and then," "hardly ever," and "never." The statistical analysis advantages of using an interval (rather than an ordinal) scale constituted the rationale for making that change. Respondents then were asked how they perceived the newspapers they read and the television news programs they watch in terms of each medium's generally critical or generally supportive slants in their coverage of both local and national government and public affairs news. These questions were used in lieu of conducting a content analysis of the various media to determine their (the media's) basically critical or supportive news coverage dispositions because it was believed that people's perceptions would provide more insightful (and therefore more valuable) information than the researcher's perspective of media bias garnered from content analyses. First,

respondents were asked which specific newspaper and which specific television station (or network) they usually read or watch to obtain both local and national government and public affairs news. The purpose here was to fix all respondents' focus on their schema for a specific news organization to avoid the uncertainty of not knowing whether some respondents might have responded from a more generalized media schemata while others may have activated a more organizational-specific schema.

Measuring Political Sophistication

A modified version of Neuman's (1986) model was adopted for the purpose of measuring political sophistication in the current study. As mentioned previously, Neuman (1986) proposed three dimensions of sophistication measurement including salience, knowledge, and conceptualization. Instrument space limitations and considerations of the time required for a respondent to complete the questionnaire precluded the inclusion of the conceptualization dimension. An adequate assessment of conceptualization could entail the use of an entire survey instrument in itself. Neuman (1986) breaks down each of the other components into their respective elements as discussed in the following sections.

Assessing salience

Neuman (1986) conceives of salience as encompassing interest, attentiveness, and involvement (or participation).

Interest. Interest was tapped using two questions. The first question stated, "Some people follow what goes on in (local/national) government and public affairs most of the time while others are not that interested. How about you? Would you say that you follow what goes on in (local/national) government and public affairs? (circle one): most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, hardly ever, or never?" Obviously, the question was asked for both local and national government. The second interest question tapped both interest and concern by asking, "In the last (local city commission/national presidential) election how important was it to you whether any particular candidate won? Again, a 1 to 10 scale was used for responses. The investigator deemed it important to anchor responses to a specific time period or event based on Bishop's (1981) proposed "information-processing" approach to survey research. According to Bishop, most survey participants "answer such questions largely in terms of whatever information is most available to them in memory about recent instances of their having paid attention to politics in one form or another" (p. 615).¹ In other words, consistent with schema theory

discussed in Chapter 2, people will tend to activate their most readily available schemata when cognitively processing questions posed to them as they search for an answer in their memories. Anchoring responses to a particular political event in time, therefore, should help to reduce this tendency for people to respond according to their most recent experiences and recollections.

Attentiveness. Several questions addressed the attentiveness component of salience. Each question began, "In the last (national/local) election held in (1988/1991), do you recall having..." Responses following this lead included, "read a newspaper editorial endorsement for any candidate or issue," "read any letters to the editor about a candidate or an issue," "read any newspaper ad for a candidate or an issue," "watched a television program about any candidate or issue," "watched a television editorial endorsement for any candidate or issue," and "watched a television commercial (ad) for any candidate or issue."

Involvement (participation). Lau and Erber (1985) suggest several indicators to assess political involvement, and all were employed in the current study. The question read, "In the last (national/local) campaign during (1988/1991), in which of the following activities did you participate at least once? (Please circle ALL that apply to you):" The activities included Lau and Er-

ber's (1985) suggestions of: wore a campaign button, tried to persuade or convince someone else about how to vote, made a campaign contribution, went to a campaign rally, and displayed a bumper sticker or a yard sign. Two other activities were added to the Lau and Erber (1985) list including: voted (which was the first response offered) and wrote a letter to the editor about a candidate or an issue.

Assessing knowledge

The knowledge questions preceded those about salience in the ordering format of the instrument in order to avoid overestimations of respondents' interest in politics. For example, Bishop (1981) discovered that such estimates of political interest varied considerably depending upon whether the interest question was asked before or after political opinion inquiries. Specifically, Bishop (1981), "found reported interest in public affairs to be higher when the question is asked at the beginning of the interview schedule just before questions on respondents' political opinions than when it is asked after such items..." (p. 618).² Presumably, the same "priming" effect would occur with knowledge questions, and, in fact, with knowledge questions the effect might emerge as even more acute than with opinion questions.

Essentially, the political knowledge questions covered three broad areas for both local and national levels

of analyses including political figures (or actors), political issues, and political groups. Most of the questions represented selective adaptations of a knowledge instrument previously developed and tested by Lusk and Judd (1988). Specific questions included naming the U.S. Secretary of State, identifying the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) as "Star Wars," knowing which political party controls the U.S. Senate, identifying the current city mayor, recognizing city-county consolidation as an important local issue, and knowing how many members serve on the city commission. All questions offered four multiple choice responses.

Measuring Political Trust and Efficacy

For purposes of the current study, the author selectively adopted measurements developed and pilot tested by Craig, Neimi, and Silver (1990) for regime-based external efficacy and incumbent-based trust, modified to reflect local and national levels of analyses. The study also employed responsiveness questions taken from the University of Michigan's National Election Study conducted by the Center for Political Studies (CPS). Incumbent-based trust was tapped with questions such as:

1. How much of the time do you think you can trust the people who run our government (here in the city of Gainesville/in Washington) to do what is right: just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?
2. When government leaders make statements to the (Gainesville/American) people on television or in the

newspapers, how often do you think they are telling the truth: just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?

3. Those we elect to public office (here in the city of Gainesville/in this country) usually try to keep the promises they have made during the election (using a 5-point strongly disagree to strongly agree scale).

In addition to these questions, the investigator included the evaluations of leadership inquiry (for local elected officials/the U.S. Congress in Washington/the Bush Administration) that was used in the Emig (1990) study to determine whether this question might be validated by loading together with the others.

The following set of questions were intended to tap external efficacy. All used the 5-point disagree/agree scale:

1. (Here in the city of Gainesville/In this country) there are many legal ways for citizens to successfully influence what the government does.
2. Under our form of government, the people (here in the city of Gainesville/in this country) have the final say about how the (city/country) is run, no matter who is in office.
3. If elected officials (here in the city of Gainesville/in this country) are not interested in hearing what the people think, there is no way to make them listen.

An additional external efficacy question designed by the investigator also was used in an attempt to test its validity using factor analytic loadings with the others, and its wording more directly addresses the specific aspect of external efficacy related to governmental

responsiveness. The question read: "How responsive do you think the government (here in the city of Gainesville/in Washington) is to the needs of people like yourself?" The question also used a 5-point scale from "not at all responsive" to "very responsive."

Finally, recalling that several of the study's hypotheses were based on the premise that blacks would feel more efficacious and trusting at the local level than whites (with just the opposite effect at the national level), a question to test the validity of that premise also was asked: "Compared to people of your racial or ethnic background in **OTHER** communities, how much personal influence do you feel you have with respect to the City of Gainesville's decision-making processes?" The responses included "A great deal," "Some," "Not very much," and "No influence at all."

Study results including reliability and factor analyses of the political sophistication and discontent measurements, along with hypotheses tests, follow in Chapter 6.

Notes

1. Italics in the original.
2. Italics in the original.

CHAPTER 6 RESULTS

Reliability estimates for measures of the constructs were obtained using Cronbach's (1951) coefficient alpha. Then, the data were factor analyzed, and, after standardizing the scores, the factor results were used to create indices for the constructs of political sophistication and political discontent.

Reliability Analyses

Political Sophistication

All of the measurements of political sophistication (i.e., knowledge, campaign media use, interest and concern, and political participation questions for local, national, and combined levels) were analyzed to obtain their reliability estimates. For the aggregation of measurements at the local level, the standardized item alpha was .55 and was not improvable through the deletion of any item. The same held true at the national level where the standardized item alpha was .52. Because no hypothesis test required using a solely local or national measure of sophistication, both were combined and then analyzed. The standardized item alpha for the combined

measurements reached .69, a result undoubtedly due to the additive effects of using twice as many items than in either the local or national level analyses. Again, the analysis suggested that in the combined scale the alpha would not improve with the deletion of any single item.

Political Discontent

As with sophistication, local, national, and combined measurements were analyzed for external efficacy, incumbent-based trust, and overall discontent (the latter representing the summation of efficacy and trust). Table 6-1 presents the standardized item alpha results for each of these.

TABLE 6-1
Standard Item Alphas
Political Trust Efficacy and Discontent

Measure	Alpha	Measure	Alpha	Measure	Alpha
Local Efficacy	.57	Local Trust	.73	Local Discontent	.78
National Efficacy	.54	National Trust	.73	National Discontent	.76
Combined Efficacy	.72	Combined Trust	.77	Combined Discontent	.84

Although reliability estimates for the individual components of local and national efficacy are lower than the combined measurements, no hypothesis test involved using those measurements in isolation from the political discontent construct. Therefore, it did not seem necessary to perform any additional reliability corrective tests to those measures.

Unlike sophistication, however, the analysis here revealed that alpha would improve with the deletion of two items. Both involved the external efficacy "there is no way to make them listen" questions at the local as well as the national levels. Both questions also were the only ones in the instrument where the responses ran in reverse, and they followed two previous external efficacy questions. In other words, respondents agreeing with the first two questions logically should have disagreed with the "make them listen" item. It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that careless reading of the items--perhaps coupled with some response set tendencies--might have contributed to the items' unreliability. It then was decided to submit all the data to factor analyses.

Factor Analyses

The first factor analysis on all political sophistication and discontent variables ran without any

researcher-specified criterion as to the number of factors, and the program attempted to extract 14 factors (see Table 6-2). No items loaded on the 13th or 14th factors which had eigenvalues of 1.04 and 1.02 respectively. Most of the trust and efficacy variables loaded on the first factor, but two--the "make them listen" questions--predictably did not. Of particular interest, the three leadership evaluation questions (i.e., local elected officials, U.S. Congress, and the Bush Administration), along with the two responsiveness questions (local and national), which the researcher had added to other trust and efficacy scales to test their validity, initially had five of the highest six factor loadings. Similarly, the two (local and national) "how closely follow government" questions, which were the only measures of political sophistication reported in the Emig (1990) study, emerged with the highest two loadings on the sophistication construct. Beyond that, however, the analysis of the sophistication measures was considerably less clear-cut than that of trust and efficacy.

As to the sophistication analysis, the local and national interest and concern questions, one local and one national knowledge question, and six participation questions (including local and national voting, local and national campaign contributions, and local and national "attempted to persuade someone how to vote") loaded on

TABLE 6-2

Initial Factor Analysis

Factors:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Response National	.68					
Leadership Congress	.67					
Do Right Local	.61		-.33			
Response Local	.61					
Leadership Local	.61			-.50		
Leadership Bush	.52			.45		
Final Say National	.50					
Do Right National	.48					
Legal Ways Local	.48					
Tell Truth Local	.48					
Promises National	.47				.33	
Legal Ways National	.47					
Final Say Local	.46					
Promises Local	.45					
Follow National		.64				
Follow Local		.63				
Voted National		.48				
Know Commissioners		.45				
Concern National		.44				
Concern Local		.44				
Contribute National		.43			.33	.35
Voted Local		.38				-.33
Know SDI		.35				
Sticker/Sign Nat.			.53			
Button National			.51			
Button Local			.51			
Sticker/Sign Local			.50			
Rally Local			.42			
Contribute Local		.31	.31			
Persuade National		.31			.43	
Persuade Local		.38			.33	
Make Listen Local				-.32	-.39	
Percent of Variance Explained:						
Eigenvalues:	12.3%	7.7%	4.9%	4.0%	3.3%	3.0%
	5.4	3.6	2.4	2.1	1.8	1.7

Table 6-2 continued

Factors:	7	8	9	10	11	12
Persuade National	-.30					
Persuade Local	-.30					
Letter to Ed. Local	.48		.38			
Letter to Ed. Nat.	.35		.36			
Concern Local		-.30				
Know SDI		-.30				
Voted National				.31		
Legal Ways Local						.31
Button Local					-.47	

Percent of Variance Explained:	2.7%	2.4%	2.0%	2.0%	1.9%	1.6%
Eigenvalues:	1.6	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.1

the second factor. The other six participation items loaded on the third factor. Inspection of the scree plot from the first factor analysis suggested a seven-factor solution.

Results of the second run using seven factors as the criterion showed no change for the trust and efficacy measure; one "make them listen" question loaded negatively on the fifth factor, and the other did not load at all. Sophistication also did not change, and the final statistics reported six eigenvalues greater than one, suggesting a six factor solution. The investigator then decided to factor analyze the political sophistication measurements separately from those of trust and efficacy.

Political Sophistication

The first sophistication analysis ran without any specified criteria, and the program attempted to extract nine factors, suggesting that a number of the variables were not measuring the construct validly. Three additional variables did load on the first factor, however, and all were knowledge questions. Most of the participation questions continued to load on a separate factor. The researcher then added all of the local and national campaign media-use questions to the calculus. Results of that analysis revealed that the campaign media use had 11 of the 12 highest factor loadings on the first factor. Final statistics suggested attempting a six-factor solution. This was done, and those results suggested a final three-factor solution. In that last analysis, the three factors accounted for 34.9% of the variance. Finally, in addition to incorporating the campaign media-use questions, the following knowledge questions were dropped from the sophistication index based on low factor loadings: Which party controls the U.S. Senate? and Who is mayor of Gainesville? Although the secretary of state question did not load on a factor, it was maintained in order to have two local and two national knowledge questions. The researcher did not foresee including the question as problematic because most respondents (71.8%)

answered it correctly anyway. Political campaign participation questions eliminated included: 1) wore a campaign button (local and national), 2) made a campaign contribution (local), 3) attended a campaign rally (local and national), 4) displayed a bumper sticker or yard sign (local and national), and 5) wrote a letter to the editor (local and national). Factor loadings for sophistication are shown in Table 6-3.

Political Discontent

In an initial factor analysis of political discontent without a factor criterion, the program attempted to extract five factors. Again, one "make them listen" question did not load on the first factor, and the other did not load at all. Consequently, both were dropped from subsequent analyses and also were excluded from the trust, efficacy, and discontent indices. The scree plot suggested a three-factor solution. Results from the three-factor analysis suggested a final two-factor solution. Factor loadings for the political discontent construct appear in Table 6-4.

TABLE 6-3
Factor Analysis - Pattern Matrix
Political Sophistication

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Factor Loadings:			
Read Local			
Letter to Editor	.78		
Read National			
Letter to Editor	.73		
Local News. Ad	.65		
National TV Endorse.	.64		
National News. Ad	.62		
National TV Ad	.60	-.36	
Local TV Ad	.57		
National TV Program	.55		
Local News. Edit.	.54	.33	
Follow National	.53	.31	
Local TV Edit.	.52		
National News. Ad	.52		
Follow Local	.51		
Know SDI	.50		
Know Number Comm.	.44		
Voted National	.41	.41	
Contribution National	.35		
Local TV Program	.33		
Know Local Issue	.32		
Voted Local	.32	.44	
Persuade Local			.59
Persuade National	.37		.51
Local Election Import.			.34
Nation. Election Import.	.30		.33

Percent of Variance Explained:			
	24.9%	6.0%	4.0%

TABLE 6-4
Factor Analysis - Pattern Matrix
Political Discontent

	Factor 1	Factor 2
Factor Loadings:		
Leadership of Congress	.68	
Responsiveness National	.66	
Do Right Local	.62	
Do Right National	.59	-.55
Tell Truth National	.57	-.54
Responsiveness Local	.55	.39
Leadership Local	.55	.51
Leadership Bush	.53	-.30
Final Say National	.51	
Keep Promises National	.50	
Tell Truth Local	.49	
Legal Ways Local	.49	
Legal Ways National	.48	
Final Say Local	.45	
Keep Promises Local	.43	.31
Percent of Variance Explained:		
	29.8%	9.0%

Hypotheses Testing

The study's first hypothesis related to previous empirical evidence that newspapers provide more critical (or negative) coverage of political news than television. As mentioned earlier, the researcher made the decision to test that premise--not on the basis of content analyses as other scholars have--but by using the judgmental perceptions of respondents in the survey. Specifically the hypothesis was:

- H1: Overall, respondents in the study will judge newspapers to be more critical in their coverage of politics than television.

A variable was created for critical newspaper coverage by averaging the scores of how critical (or sup-

portive) individuals judged both local and national newspaper coverage of government, and the same thing was done for television. As predicted, sample respondents judged television ($M = 6.4$) as significantly more supportive of government than newspapers ($M = 6.1$), $t(166) = -2.64$, $p < .009$, providing statistical support for the hypothesis.

The second hypothesis predicted a relationship between media use and levels of political sophistication:

- H2: Respondents in the News/TV groups will evince higher levels of political sophistication than those in the High Both groups who, in turn, will evince significantly higher levels of political sophistication than those in the TV/News groups.

After standardizing the scores, the researcher created an index for political sophistication and then compared the groups described in the hypothesis. As worded, the statistical tests required two comparisons, and neither test achieved statistical significance. The researcher must therefore conclude that H2 was not supported.

Because the third and eighth hypotheses predict opposite directions of political discontent between blacks and whites at the local and national levels of analyses, those hypotheses require simultaneous discussion. The hypotheses were:

- H3: Overall, at the local level, whites will register higher degrees of political discontent than blacks.
- H8: Overall, at the national level, blacks will register higher degrees of political discontent than whites.

At both the local and national levels, lower means reflect higher levels of political discontent. In the

case of the former, blacks did emerge as more trusting and externally efficacious ($M = .15$) than whites ($M = -.12$), and the result proved statistically significant $t(170.8) = 2.72, p < .007$, supporting H3. At the national level, however, blacks continued to reflect higher levels of trust and efficacy ($M = .12$) than whites ($M = -.08$), so H12 was not supported. Table 6-5 displays the means of the discontent construct by race and levels of analyses.

TABLE 6-5
Discontent by Race and Analyses Levels

	Hypothesis	Blacks	Whites	Significance
Local	H3	.15	-.12	.007
National	H8	.12	-.08	(ns)

Hypotheses four, five, and six also dealt with comparisons of political discontent between blacks and whites but within the context of the media-use groups:

- H4: Within the News/TV group, at the local level, whites will register higher degrees of political discontent than blacks.
- H5: Within the TV/News group, at the local level, whites will register higher degrees of political discontent than blacks.
- H6: Within the High Both, at the local level, whites will register higher degrees of political discontent than blacks.

A test of H4 (for the News/TV media-use group) revealed means for blacks of ($M = .18$) and whites of ($M = -.24$),

and those differences were statistically significant ($t[50] = 2.62, p < .01$). Within the TV/News group, blacks also registered less discontent ($M = .05$) than whites ($M = -.26$), and the results were statistically significant ($t[57.6] = 1.68, p < .09$). The pattern of comparative discontent persisted with the High Both group in that blacks remained less discontented ($M = .22$) than whites ($M = .14$), but the results did not achieve statistical significance. Therefore, H4 and H5 were supported, but H6 was not. Table 6-6 shows the local discontent means by race and media-use group.

TABLE 6-6

Local Discontent by Race and Media Use Group

	Hypothesis	Blacks	Whites	Significance
News/TV	H4	.18	-.24	.01
TV/News	H5	.05	-.26	.09
High Both	H6	.22	.14	(ns)

Statistical tests for hypotheses H9, H10, and H11 also produced some mixed results. The hypotheses were:

H9: Within the News/TV groups, at the national level, blacks will register higher degrees of political discontent than whites.

H10: Within the TV/News groups, at the national level, blacks will register higher degrees of political discontent than whites.

H11: Within the High Both groups, at the national level, blacks will register higher degrees of political discontent than whites.

With the News/TV groups (H9)--and opposite to the prediction--whites continued to demonstrate higher levels of discontent ($\bar{M} = -.32$) than blacks ($\bar{M} = .03$), and the difference was significant at $t(45.5) = 2.0$, $p < .05$. For the TV/News groups (H10), blacks followed the prediction and became less trusting ($\bar{M} = -.13$) than whites ($\bar{M} = .03$) but the differences were not statistically significant. In the High Both groups (H11), blacks once again emerged as more trusting ($\bar{M} = .28$) than whites ($\bar{M} = .17$), but those results also lacked statistical significance. Because the significant findings in H9 were in the opposite direction of the hypothesis, the researcher must conclude no support for H9, H10, or H11. Table 6-7 displays the means of national discontent by race and media-use groups.

TABLE 6-7

National Discontent by Race and Media Use Group

	Hypothesis	Blacks	Whites	Significance
News/TV	H9	.03	-.32	.05
TV/News	H10	-.13	.03	(ns)
High Both	H11	.28	.17	(ns)

As with H2, the seventh hypothesis also consisted of two parts:

- H7: At the local level, respondents in the News/TV groups will evince significantly higher levels of political discontent than those in the High Both groups who, in turn, will evince significantly higher levels of political discontent than those in the TV/News groups.

An implication of the seventh hypothesis--based on the study's theoretical perspective--is that an association exists between different media-use patterns and differences in political discontent without regard to racial considerations. Results of statistical tests here suggest that such differences do exist but not necessarily in the predicted direction. For example, a test of the first part of the hypothesis revealed that the News/TV groups did register higher levels of discontent ($\bar{M} = -.07$) than those in the High Both groups ($\bar{M} = .18$), and the results achieved statistical significance of $t(103.3) = -2.16, p < .03$. And a comparison of the TV/News groups ($\bar{M} = -.11$) with the High Both groups ($\bar{M} = .18$) also produced statistically significant results of $t(112.9) = -2.42, p < .02$, but, as an examination of the means reveals, not in the predicted direction (i.e., the TV/News groups turned out as less rather than more politically trusting than the High Both groups). Table 6-7 compares the local (H7) versus national (H12)--discussed next--means for discontent by media-use groups. The first part of H7 received support, therefore, but the second part did not.

Finally, the last hypothesis (H12) also suggests an

association between media-use patterns and levels of political discontent (without regard to racial differences) but at the national level:

H12: At the national level, respondents in the News/TV groups will evince significantly higher levels of political discontent than those in the High Both groups who, in turn, will evince significantly higher levels of political discontent than those in the TV/News groups.

Again, as worded, the hypothesis breaks down into two parts. And, as was true at the local level (H7), the results both support and contradict the hypothesis in the same directions. As predicted, the News/TV groups did display significantly higher levels of discontent ($M = -.17$) than those in the High Both groups ($M = .22$), $t(109.9) = -3.2$, $p < .002$. Opposite of the prediction, however, those in the High Both groups reflected significantly lower rather than higher levels of discontent ($M = .22$) than those in the TV/News groups ($M = -.05$), $t(117.8) = -2.31$, $p < .02$. As mentioned previously, Table 6-8 compares the results of H7 and H12.

TABLE 6-8

Local versus National Discontent by Media Use Groups

	Local (H7)	Sig.	National (H12)	Sig.
News/TV with High Both	-.07 .18	.03	-.17 .22	.002
TV/News with High Both	-.11 .18	.02	-.05 .22	.02

Finally, Table 6-9 summarizes the findings for all of the hypotheses in the study.

TABLE 6-9

Summary of the Findings			
H1 (Supportive Media)			
Television	6.4		
Newspapers	6.1	.009	
H2 (Sophistication)			
News/TV	.08		
High Both	-.02		
TV/News	-.006	(ns)	
H3 (Local Discontent)			
Blacks	.15		
Whites	-.12	.007	
H4 (Local News/TV Discontent)			
Blacks	.18		
Whites	-.24	.01	
H5 (Local TV/News Discontent)			
Blacks	.05		
Whites	-.26	.09	
H6 (Local High Both Discontent)			
Blacks	.22		
Whites	.14	(ns)	
H7 (Local Discontent by Media)			
News/TV with	-.07		
High Both	.18	.03	
TV/News with	-.11		
High Both	.18	.02	
H8 (National Discontent)			
Blacks	.12		
Whites	-.08	(ns)	
H9 (National News/TV Discontent)			
Blacks	.03		
Whites	-.32	.05	
H10 (National TV/News Discontent)			
Blacks	-.13		
Whites	.03	(ns)	

Table 6-9 continued

Hypothesis:	Mean:	Significance:
H11 (National High Both Discontent)		
Blacks	.28	
Whites	.17	(ns)
H12 (National Discontent by Media)		
News/TV with	-.17	
High Both	.22	.002
TV/News with	-.05	
High Both	.22	.02

A discussion of the implications of the findings reported here remains for the final chapter, Conclusions.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS

Validity Checks

Media-use Groups

Because study participants were placed in one of the three media-use groups on the basis of their initial self-reported responses to the media screening questions, the first validity question addresses the accuracy of those placements. As noted previously, a few inconsistencies were observed later between the screening question responses and some respondents' answers to the four media importance questions on the written instrument. The four inquiries referred to here asked how important (on a 1 to 10 scale) newspapers and television were for obtaining information about government and public affairs at both the local and national levels. An analysis of between-group comparisons of average responses to these questions, therefore, might offer one method of assessing group placement validity. For example, when comparing the News/TV group to TV/News, one should expect to find higher means for responses to the importance of newspaper questions among the former than

with the latter. The same should hold true in the reverse for television's importance. Accordingly, the researcher conducted a series of tests to assess such comparisons. With rare exception (as noted) the test results nearly all pointed in the anticipated direction, and all achieved statistical significance where that was relevant.

The first test revealed that those in the News/TV group reported significantly higher importance of local newspapers ($\bar{M} = 8.3$) than those in the TV/News group ($\bar{M} = 6.1$), $t(99.8) = 6.72$, $p < .0001$. A similar result occurred for the importance of national newspapers in that the News/TV group reported a significantly higher importance rating ($\bar{M} = 6.6$) than the TV/News group ($\bar{M} = 5.7$), $t(107.9) = 2.27$, $p < .02$. As expected, the exact reverse proved true for television's importance. At the local level, those in the TV/News group rated television significantly higher ($\bar{M} = 8.5$) than the News/TV group ($\bar{M} = 5.7$), $t(78.4) = -7.99$, $p < .0001$. For the importance of national television, the corresponding figures were $\bar{M} = 8.1$ versus $\bar{M} = 6.8$, $t(94.4) = -3.49$, $p < .001$.

Turning to the News/TV respondents compared with those in the High Both group, one should expect to find no differences in the importance of newspapers because

both groups should regard newspapers as high in importance. But significant differences in television's importance should emerge given that television ought to have high importance for the High Both group but low importance for News/TV individuals. And those findings were obtained. At the local level, the means for newspapers' importance were $\bar{M} = 8.3$ for the News/TV group and $\bar{M} = 8.6$ for High Both (n.s.). As predicted, for local television the News/TV group rated it significantly less important ($\bar{M} = 5.7$) than did the High Both individuals, ($\bar{M} = 8.4$), $t(78.2) = -7.84$, $p < .0001$. At the national level, however, the picture becomes somewhat clouded. Although the expected result was obtained for television in that the News/TV group rated it significantly less important ($\bar{M} = 6.8$) than the High Both respondents ($\bar{M} = 8.2$), $t(84.8) = -4.08$, $p < .0001$, for national newspapers the situation changed. There, the News/TV group ranked newspapers as somewhat less important ($\bar{M} = 6.8$) than did the High Both group ($\bar{M} = 7.6$), and the difference proved statistically significant, $t(98.9) = -2.67$, $p < .009$.

In terms of comparing the TV/News group with High Both, one should expect to find exactly the opposite results from those of the News/TV with High Both comparisons. In other words, TV/News and High Both ought to reflect equally high importance levels for television but

show significant differences for newspapers. At both the local and national levels, no differences emerged for television's importance. Locally, the mean for TV/News ($\bar{M} = 8.5$) did not differ significantly from High Both ($\bar{M} = 8.4$), and nationally those respective means were $\bar{M} = 8.1$ and $\bar{M} = 8.2$ (n.s.). The results for newspapers did show significant differences, however. At the local level, the TV/News group rated newspapers as significantly less important ($\bar{M} = 6.1$) than did the High Both group ($\bar{M} = 8.6$), $t(102.5) = -7.73$, $p < .0001$. The same pattern held for national newspapers with the respective means of $\bar{M} = 5.7$ versus $\bar{M} = 7.6$, $t(114.4) = -5.46$, $p < .0001$.

With the single exception of the News/TV versus High Both groups for newspapers at the national level, therefore, the test results tend to confirm the validity of the media-use groupings. The exception noted above possible could be due to: 1) people in the News/TV group rank television as equally important to newspapers ($\bar{M} = 6.8$ in both cases) in obtaining national news, 2) most people in the News/TV group (87%) rely on the same newspaper for both local and national news, but they regard that paper as substantially more important for local news ($\bar{M} = 8.3$) than for national news ($\bar{M} = 6.8$), 3) people in the High Both group may exhibit a "positivity bias" (as

discussed later), or 4) some combination of these factors may be extant.

Black-white Efficacy Differences

Several hypotheses predicted that blacks would emerge as more politically efficacious and trusting than whites at the local level. These hypotheses rested on the premise that blacks would perceive that they have greater representation in--and more access to--local government in comparison to blacks in other communities where previous studies have found them as less efficacious and trusting than whites. One survey question attempted to test the validity of that premise directly:

Compared to people of your racial or ethnic background in **OTHER** communities, how much personal influence do you feel that you have with respect to the city of Gainesville's decision-making processes? A great deal, Some, Not very much, No influence at all.

A test of that question revealed that blacks do feel they have somewhat greater personal influence ($\bar{M} = 2.5$) than whites ($\bar{M} = 2.3$), although the results missed attaining statistical significance, $t(166.6) = 1.77$, $p < .08$. Tests of black-white differences on several other variables were significant, however, and they might lend some indirect support for the underlying premise previously described.

One such indicator involves political knowledge differences. For example, significant differences occurred

between blacks and whites on all three of the national knowledge questions. On the U.S. Secretary of State question, the mean for whites correctly answering was significantly higher ($M = .83$) than blacks ($M = .6$), $t(155.3) = -3.49$, $p < .001$. For the SDI question, the corresponding result was $M = .7$ versus $M = .3$, $t(174.2) = -5.62$, $p < .0001$, while the party controlling the senate question resulted in means of $M = .6$ against $M = .3$, $t(174.5) = -3.72$, $p < .0001$. At the same time, there were no black-white differences on the three local knowledge questions. In fact, the average mean of the two groups for all three questions was exactly the same ($M = 5.66$).

In terms of political involvement and concern, local-national differences between whites and blacks also appeared. For example, whites tended to vote more significantly at the national level ($M = .8$) than blacks ($M = .6$), $t(160) = -3.43$, $p < .001$, but in the last local election there was no significant difference in the two voting means ($M = .67$ for whites and $M = .6$ for blacks, n.s.). And the results of that local election (where one black incumbent stood for reelection to the city commission) were significantly more important to blacks ($M = 6.9$) than to whites ($M = .6$), $t(172.7) = 2.42$, $p < .017$. Finally, during the local election campaign, blacks also were significantly more likely to have worn a campaign

button ($M = .13$) than whites ($M = .04$), $t(133.2) = 2.06$, $p < .04$, and more apt to have displayed a bumper sticker or a yard sign ($M = .17$) than whites ($M = .08$), $t(147.8) = 1.85$, $p < .07$.

These findings suggest a stronger local (versus national) orientation on the part of blacks in the study community and lend some support to the explanation that their greater perceptions of representation and access can account for their emerging as significantly more efficacious and trusting than whites at the local level. This finding supports both the previously discussed Abramson speculation about perceived power structure differences by blacks in different communities (possibly resulting in their greater feelings of political efficacy and trust) as well as the Foster (1978) findings comparing the communities of East St. Louis and Peoria in Illinois.

Overall Theoretical Perspectives

Finally, the study also postulated a relationship between media use, political sophistication, and political discontent. Specifically, the hypotheses were based on the premise that the News/TV group would emerge as the most sophisticated, followed by the High Both group, with the TV/News group as the least sophisticated. The study also presumed that political sophistication would have an

inverse relationship with political trust (i.e., that the most sophisticated also would represent the most politically discontented).

In terms of media use and sophistication, none of the differences between the means of the media use groups achieved statistical significance on the sophistication construct. As sophistication was measured in the current study, therefore, there appears to be little connection between political sophistication and media-use patterns.

The relationship between political sophistication and discontent was tested two ways. First, an index for total discontent was created by combining local with national discontent (recalling that discontent was the summed average of the trust and efficacy measurements). Although sophistication was examined at both the local and national levels, the only index here pertained to total (i.e., combined) sophistication. A correlation analysis did reveal a negative relationship between total sophistication and total discontent (remembering that lower scores on the discontent index equated to higher levels of discontent) of $r = -.12$, and the result was statistically significant, $p < .07$. The second test segregated the top 10% ($n = 18$) on the sophistication index from the balance of the sample and then compared those two groups on the political discontent variable.

The top 10% did relate more negatively to trust ($\bar{M} = -.28$) than everyone else ($\bar{M} = .05$), and again the result was statistically significant: $t(19.6) = -1.87, p < .08$. The researcher therefore concludes support for the validity of the study's underlying theoretical premises relating political sophistication to political discontent.

Study Limitations

The most obvious limitation of the current study lies in the use of a nonrandom quota sample which both precludes generalizations and makes the use of more powerful inferential statistics inappropriate. The high nonresponse rate (especially refusals) among blacks also creates some concern in that one cannot know whether the many people who could or would not participate might have given significantly different responses than the respondents who did.

Although the self-administered questionnaire should have reduced the incidence of respondents giving "socially desirable" responses, some participants may have done so anyway, and that presents another potential limitation. For example, some prospective respondents might have given socially desirable answers to the media screening questions (e.g., overstating the importance of media in order to appear to the interviewer as more "en-

lightened"), and that might have stimulated them to continue answering in a similar mode while completing the written instrument. The researcher also cannot be certain as to what extent, if any, questions or responses might have been misread or misunderstood.

Finally, because the interviews were conducted in two separate locations the principal investigator was unable to be present at all times to monitor the verbal screening questions and thereby assure that interviewers were consistent in their approaches. For example, after a research confederate was approached in an inept manner by one of the interviewers, that person (the confederate) reported the incident confidentially to the investigator, resulting in an on-site retraining of that particular interviewer.

Despite these limitations, however, the researcher remains convinced that the study produced some insightful, useful, and worthwhile data and some helpful indications for future research.

Discussion

Overall the researcher believes that validation of the measurements for political discontent was obtained as indicated by the results of reliability and factor analyses. Some of the sophistication measurements were not validated, however, and were dropped. At the same

time, a somewhat serendipitous discovery was that certain other measurements (e.g., campaign media use)--originally not intended to measure sophistication--did tap the construct effectively, and they were added to the index. With regard to general media-use measurements (as opposed to campaign media use), the inclusion of additional questions probably would have enhanced those assessments. At the same time, the media-use group placements seem to demonstrate some validity.

In terms of the hypotheses, respondents did perceive newspapers as more critical in their news coverage of government than television as predicted. The researcher argues that such perceptual measurements represent a valuable addition to the study of this phenomenon and that they warrant consideration as enhancements and supplements to--if not complete replacements for--traditional content analyses.

The fact that political sophistication among the three media-use groups emerged in the predicted pattern, but the differences did not attain statistical significance, seems perplexing. Momentarily putting aside the High Both group (which may represent an unrealistic research distinction, as discussed later), based on the consistent results of previous studies one should have expected significant differences on the sophistication

construct between those more reliant on newspapers and people who are more dependent on television. The fact that most earlier research on the subject of media use and sophistication looked only at the knowledge component should not have made a difference if, as others have theorized, knowledge represents the most important component of the construct. At the same time, several of the knowledge questions (and many of the participation questions) did not load on the construct. The investigator also acknowledges that the inclusion of campaign media use as part of the measurement of sophistication--and then attempting to distinguish between media-use groups on the basis of the construct--represents a certain confounding of the two. Nevertheless, there does remain a pragmatic--if not a conceptual--distinction between media use during a political campaign and year-round media use for surveillance of government and public affairs. The question remains, however, as to what extent people actually make such a distinction in answering questions during surveys. The only final conclusion that seems possible from this study's results involving media use and political sophistication suggests that researchers have yet to find an effective methodology for measuring political sophistication, media use, or both.

The fact that blacks emerged as more trusting and efficacious than whites at the local level (as predicted)

possibly says more about the study community than about either blacks or whites themselves. Certainly a good amount of the evidence regarding black-white differences at the local and national levels previously illustrated points in that direction. And although blacks became less trusting (and whites more so) at the national level, they still remained more trusting than whites, though not to a statistically significant degree. The current study did not examine the extent to which the national level trust of blacks might represent some sort of "spillover" or "halo" effect from the local community, but that subject definitely has research appeal. In other words, the research question would ask whether greater trust and efficacy generated at the local level might project itself--to a certain degree, at least--onto the national scene. The pragmatic implications for either major political party's "grass roots" efforts to cultivate support at the local level seem obvious here.

As predicted, whites within the News/TV media-use group at the local level did evince higher levels of discontent than blacks, and the result obtained statistical significance ($p < .01$). The same thing occurred in the TV/News group, and the result also was statistically significant. In the High Both group, the differences all but disappeared and, of course, lacked statistical sup-

port. And one finds the same pattern at the national level and also in the between-group comparisons at both the local (H7) and national (H12) levels. Contrary to predictions, whites in the TV/News group displayed relatively high levels of political discontent (even slightly more than whites in the News/TV group) at the local level. Only at the national level did this group perform as expected with statistical significance. The findings suggest that whether an individual relied more on newspapers or television for news of local government and local public affairs had little bearing on levels of political discontent in this study. The fact that the pattern changes at the national level to one more in line with the predictions suggests once more that the results may say more about the research community than about media-use configurations. A more interesting question, however, concerns the High Both group.

Opposite to the study's predictions, individuals in the High Both group--both blacks and whites--consistently demonstrated the highest levels of political trust and efficacy, and one must attempt to explain that result. Earlier the notion of socially desirable responses was mentioned, and therein may lie the key to at least partially explaining the High Both group results. Two examples from the current study's data will serve to illustrate this point.

First, as reported, respondents were asked to assess how much personal influence they have in the city's decision-making processes. Individuals in the High Both group responded that they perceived themselves as having significantly more influence ($\bar{M} = 2.6$) than both those in the News/TV group ($\bar{M} = 2.2$), $t(108.2) = -2.32$, $p < .02$ and those in the TV/News group ($\bar{M} = 2.2$), $t(115.2) = -2.14$, $p < .03$. Because blacks in the overall sample had reported somewhat higher levels of personal influence than whites, the investigator also analyzed black-white differences in the High Both group to verify that race was not a factor, and no significant difference between blacks and whites in the High Both group was found.

Secondly, in order to test the hypothesis that respondents would perceive newspapers as more critical than television in their coverage of news about governmental, they were asked to rate both local and national newspapers and television in this regard on a 1 to 10 scale. To examine global comparisons of those variables between the media-use groups, the investigator summed and then averaged the scores for local and national newspapers and television on the critical-supportive dimension. Comparing the News/TV and TV/News groups revealed no statistically significant differences between the two, but some important variances did appear between those two

groups. For example, the News/TV group tended to see newspapers as more supportive overall than television ($\bar{M} = 5.7$ versus $\bar{M} = 5.5$) while the TV/News group rated television as more supportive ($\bar{M} = 6.1$ versus $\bar{M} = 5.6$). At the same time, those in the High Both group consistently rated both media at both levels as more supportive than either of the other two media-use groups, and in three of the four comparisons the results achieved statistical significance. The one that did not was between TV/News and High Both on the television variable, and the respective means were $\bar{M} = 6.4$ for TV/News and $\bar{M} = 6.7$ for High Both. For newspapers, the High Both group significantly saw them as more supportive ($\bar{M} = 6.6$) than did the TV/News group ($\bar{M} = 5.8$), $t(117) = -3.50$, $p < .001$. Both of the News/TV versus High Both media evaluations were significant. The latter group significantly rated newspapers as more supportive ($\bar{M} = 6.6$) than did the News/TV group ($\bar{M} = 6.0$), $t(102) = -2.45$, $p < .02$, and they also perceived television as more supportive ($\bar{M} = 6.7$) than did the News/TV group ($\bar{M} = 6.0$), $t(107) = -3.13$, $p < .002$. Given the variance in responses to the critical-supportive questions between the News/TV and TV/News groups, it does seem somewhat unlikely that individuals who initially claimed high importance of both media (the High Both group) also would judge both media at both

levels of analysis as more supportive than those in the other two media groups, unless some other process was taking place. That process could involve a tendency for some respondents to consistently give inflated, positive responses to survey questions. In other words, it could involve a tendency for some people to exhibit what one might term a "socially desirable response set," and that dynamic might have occurred with many respondents in the current study's High Both group. The current data set does not permit a fuller exploration of that possibility, but future research should use caution when creating a media-use group such as the High Both group in the current study. For example, a researcher might unwittingly create a "socially desirable response set" cell within the research design as the result of a media-use criterion.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the study's results, and despite the lack of a significant relationship between patterns of media use and political sophistication, the researcher believes that studies investigating possible links between political sophistication, discontent, and media use represent a promising and fruitful avenue of scientific exploration. In measuring discontent, the study's investigator also recommends including the evaluations of leadership

measurement for incumbent-based trust and the responsiveness measurement for regime-based external efficacy, given how well those measurements loaded on the discontent construct. At the same time, inclusion of campaign media-use measurements in the sophistication calculus might present some problems when comparing sophistication with media use. Attempts to perfect and refine more effective sophistication and media-use measurements should occupy a high priority in the research communities of political science and mass communication.

In terms of replication, the researcher recommends testing black-white differences in political efficacy and trust in different communities with varied configurations in political power structures. More definitive results also might occur from comparisons of communities which have predominantly black (e.g., East St. Louis, IL) or predominantly white (e.g., Peoria, IL) populations. Finally, the obvious reliance on a randomly drawn probability (as opposed to the current study's nonrandom quota) sample should enhance any future similar study's outcome.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Arthur G. Emig received his Bachelor of Science degree in journalism from the University of Oregon in 1963. Emig spent more than 20 years as a fund raising executive with local United Way organizations in Portland, Oregon; Santa Rosa, California; Louisville, Kentucky; and Long Island, New York. He also served for more than three years on the national staff of United Way of America in Alexandria, Virginia, between 1977 and 1980, where he authored a number of fund raising publications.

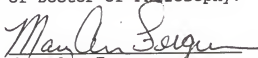
In 1986, Emig matriculated at the University of Florida to pursue an academic career. He received his Master of Arts in Mass Communication in 1988 and entered the Ph.D. program that same year, graduating in 1991. Emig was hired as an assistant professor of communications to teach communication research and public relations methods at the University of South Alabama beginning in September 1991.

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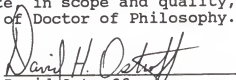
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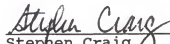
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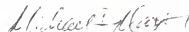
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